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THE
METHODISM
OF
THE FUTURE.

BY
PRESBYTER.

*Notes
important*

LONDON:
PARTRIDGE AND OAKEY, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND 70, EDGWARE ROAD.

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PREFACE.

HAD we not possessed a strong liking for short titles, we should have drawn out the one prefixed to this pamphlet in some such way as the following, viz.:—"The Methodism of the Future: a Review of the Schisms in its past History; their Occasion; and their Remedy in Suggestions for a more perfect Church Organisation than that which now obtains, on Principles already established or recognised by its Founder and the Conference." This would have formed an ample description of the contents of these pages.

We have had many serious and most perplexing meditations on the propriety of

allowing the following thoughts to pass through the press, for the consideration of our Connexion. We should have preferred another method of making them known, but none occurred to us of which we could properly avail ourselves, and we have been shut up, very reluctantly, to the present form of publication.

We have, naturally, very little taste for vexed questions in ecclesiastical politics. It would be extremely difficult for us to work up our mind into anything like sympathy with the earnestness, with which some enter into the consideration of controversies about details. Our regards have ever been fixed upon the ends to be accomplished by the external arrangements of a Church. Nevertheless, we do not hold with those who deem such matters unworthy of careful consideration, and of a right and definite settlement.

For ourselves, we should find no difficulty in obtaining in Methodism all we want for personal edification and growth in grace, and for all of opportunity for doing good to others, of which we could ever avail ourselves, if the Holy Ghost were to deign to use us thus as His instrument. We are content to let things remain as they are. We are sure we could not better ourselves by any Church-change we could make. We are therefore prepared to abide in Methodism as it is at present constituted. Others, however, are not so minded. Proposals for alteration of a multiform description are now under the serious consideration of the authorities of our Connexion, and we are actually threatened with some important changes.

In these circumstances, views, which have been familiar to us for years, respecting certain parts of our economy, have recurred

with increased vividness to our mind. Rightly or wrongly, we have felt impelled by a strong sense of duty, in the present juncture of affairs, to take the necessary steps for presenting these views to any of our Fathers and Brethren who may deem them worthy of consideration. We have, however, thought it right, in the meantime, to limit the circulation of our opinions within such narrow bounds, as might secure the object we have at heart, should it please the Great Head of the Church to grant it to us, by influencing the minds of those of His servants, to whom we may have access, to come to conclusions in harmony with our own.

We express it as our belief, that Methodism has yet a great work to accomplish. Our land and the world cannot do without it. We have a sacred deposit from God, which we may not keep to ourselves.

Although our Founder had no new truths revealed to him by God, yet the course of experience through which he was led by the Holy Ghost, fixed his attention on some aspects of the doctrines of salvation, of vital importance to the present experience and future eternal interests of believers. In proportion as these are made known and received, men will be led to long for and embrace those special means of grace which are peculiar to our section of the Church. At this very time, when a marked religious awakening is taking place, in other circles than our own, and on a scale far more extended than some of us seem to be aware, it cannot be doubted that there are multitudes in our land, who are in search of such a spiritual home as Methodism, did they but know it, would afford to them. Most earnestly, therefore, do we long, that ministers and people may again only busy

themselves in their proper work of spreading Scriptural Holiness through the land; and in order to this, we wish a speedy adjustment of some parts of our ecclesiastical system, which shall free it, in time to come, from that attrition to which it has been subject, and fit it more fully to accomplish its appropriate part in the work to which we are called.

Thus influenced, with unfeigned diffidence and deference, we now submit to our readers the following considerations and suggestions.

March 10, 1852.

THE
METHODISM OF THE FUTURE.

THE master-mind of Methodism, under God, was the Rev. John Wesley. No one ought to be surprised that those who have imbibed the views of Divine truth and Christian practice which he held and promulgated, should sometimes call themselves "Wesleyan Methodists." The name, however, which he gave to his followers, was "the people called Methodists." It may, perhaps, be worthy of some consideration, whether, on the whole, it would not be better to adhere to Mr. Wesley's own mode of expression.* In the following pages this will be done.

Methodism has its own system of doctrinal truth. It has also its own distinctive polity. Bitterly, ignorantly, and sometimes wilfully, has the former been misrepresented by men without

* Note A.

its pale; rarely, if ever, by men within. Not so, however, with the polity of Methodism. Its most relentless assailants have been nurtured within its own enclosures, and have usually acquired whatever of aptitude for polemic or other warfare they possessed, in the manifold functions and offices to which it has introduced them.

The schisms of Methodism are the painful passages in its history. These, however, are not peculiar to it. The history of the primitive Churches is fearfully marked by schismatic disputation and dissension. St. Paul had to endure "cruel mockings." He even was called to defend himself from accusations as groundless and as disgraceful as any brought, in modern times, against those who have sought to enter into his labours. In answer to charges which some had dared to prefer against the great Apostle of the Gentiles, he had to condescend to reply—"We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man."* With charges and insinuations like these, the founder of Methodism often met. The first person, for instance, who

* 2 Cor. vii. 2.

received his sanction to become a lay preacher, turned against him, — called him “Pope,” spread false reports concerning him, divided the original society at the Old Foundery, formed the separatists into an independent church, and set up for himself as a minister. As it was with the Founder, so has it been with his sons in the Gospel. A large volume would not suffice for the narration of a tithe of the calumnies to which the true and faithful adherents of John Wesley have been subjected by the false, the rash, the weak, the prejudiced, and the wicked.

It would be no difficult task, were this our object, to account for very much of the gratuitous misrepresentation and groundless accusation which have, more or less, been associated with Methodism and the Methodists from the beginning. It is only necessary to advert to two sad facts, to find, in most instances, the true source of all this malevolence:—the one, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart; the other, Satan’s malignity and rage. It was not to be expected that a system, which has done more for Christ and His cause than all the other human instrumentalities of these later days put

together, would be permitted to escape any tempest which the "Prince of the Power of the Air" could raise. Again and again the storm of persecution has arisen, but as often has "the Pilot of Galilee" arisen too, and rebuked the wind, and Methodism has had, for a time, "a great calm." And then, when "the Churches" had "rest," the members "were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." *

To the two sources adverted to must be ascribed the uniformly positive, and most unblushing, violation of every precept of Christ bearing on the deportment of brethren professing to belong to the household of faith, which has characterised the proceedings of Methodist schismatics. Take either individual secessions, or the larger disruptions which have occurred, and, with scarcely an exception, you find them marked by railing accusations, the bitterest terms of reproach, uncharitable surmises, hatred, envy, malice, falsehood, and fraud.

It is curious and most grievous to see how, in each controversy, these sad sins are reproduced,

* Acts ix. 31.

and always after the same type. Look into the letters and pamphlets of any one of them, and the same phraseology and the same charges are to be found. You have only to change the names of individuals in the writings of the enemies who were within the camp, either in Mr. Wesley's own days, or immediately after his death, and you have the calumnies of the "Grand Central," or of "the Corresponding Committee for detecting abuses," of our own times. So little of novelty is there in Methodist disputation.

Dark and dismal passages are, perhaps, to be met with in every angry controversy which has happened in this wicked world, since Cain hated his brother Abel ; but we, at least, have never met with any to exceed, in virulent and vulgar personalities, those penned by the self-styled reformers of Methodism. Men of the world do not so write. And, so far as we are read in controversies—where the *odium theologicum* has been, alas, but too obvious—we never met with any, professing the sanctity of these men, who ever so disgraced themselves.

It wrings one's heart to be compelled, in sober truth and earnestness, thus to characterise the

proceedings of men who once belonged to that beloved brotherhood, which has within it, as it seems to us, after large acquaintance with existing Churches, earnest, fuller and more manifold, of Heaven's own communion, than are to be met with in any other Christian fellowship on earth. It might make angels weep. It ought to lead to much searching of heart, and deep humiliation before God on our part; and withal, each one of us ought to read to his own soul the admonitory caution—"Let him that thinketh he most assuredly standeth, take heed lest he fall." *

It were little to be wondered at, if the manifestations to which we have adverted had sometimes suggested, to the thoughtful among us, grave doubts respecting the teaching or the economics under which such fruit could ripen. But these invariably give way, in proportion as any one acquires knowledge of self, and attains to a true experience of the life of God in the soul, and realises the requirements of that life, and the means necessary for its advancing growth within, and its full development without in works of faith and labours of love. The convic-

* 1 Corinthians x. 12—Wesley's New Testament.

tion soon fastens upon the mind, that the counterfeit proves the existence of the real; and that Methodism, in its doctrine, its order, its discipline, is the truest development of primitive Christianity which the world has seen.* By the use of its means and appliances, with the blessing of God, a man may realise the largest amount of personal spiritual benefit, and have opened to him, whether in the high walks of office, or in the more retired paths of private membership, the most numerous and advantageous opportunities of doing good. The penny spent, it is our belief, in the world-wide charities of Methodism, from the advantages which its peculiar organisation has secured, will go further than the shilling cast into other coffers. Every man loving his Saviour, as a man pardoned and purified through Him will do, has opportunity in Methodism to develope, to the fullest extent permitted to him in a present state, the Saviour's injunction,—“If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”† The highest and holiest ambition to be and to do whatever God's grace and gifts may enable one to reach, may best and soonest, with fewest

* Note B.

† John xiv. 15.

lets and hindrances, be satisfied in the means of grace and the opportunities of usefulness which the Methodism of John Wesley affords. Indeed, it may be distinctly observed, that other communities and individuals have only been successful in accomplishing their mission as "the salt of the earth," and "the lights of the world," as they have succeeded in imbibing the Methodist spirit, and in adopting the Methodist plans, with such modifications, of course, as their own peculiar circumstances required. It will scarcely, we think, be doubted, by any one acquainted with the change which has come over the evangelistic efforts of Christ's people in these lands, since Methodism rose, that its indirect influences for good have been almost as pervading and powerful as its direct operations. It is believed, that as the number of the ingenuous and large-minded in other sections of the Church increases, the acknowledgments of obligation, under God, to Wesley and his coadjutors, will be more frequent and hearty than they have been in the times of bitter sectarianism through which we have been passing. At one time, when the formation of the Evangelical Alliance was heralded with so much apparent public favour, we

had hoped that well-founded complaints of a rude, sour sectary were about to pass away, and the day at length to dawn on Christ's distracted and divided Church in Great Britain, when the world should say again, as they did of old, "Behold how these Christians love one another." In this expectation, however, we confess with grief that we have been sorely disappointed.

With so much of the real and the attractive in Methodism, the frequency and extent of its schisms have sometimes perplexed its adherents, while they have greatly astonished the members of other denominations. A little reflection and acquaintance with facts will, however, remove much of this surprise.

The history of the three leading schisms in the Methodist body may be told in a line or two. One or more ministers become disaffected. They so commit themselves as to compel their brethren to separate them from the body. Then comes a tale of personal injury. Sympathy is awakened by the one-sided and exaggerated statement given. And, in accordance with a curious but common exhibition of human nature, the cause of the separated is embraced as a personal quarrel, and

sin and error stoutly defended.* Then changes are proposed, which have no more connection with the origin of the dispute, than have "Goodwin sands with Tenterden steeple." The separated become reformers of all but of themselves. And Methodism affords facilities, which are not to be met with in other religious bodies, for this worst of all developments of charlatanry. To some of the more prominent of these we now advert.

The itinerancy of Methodism affects, more or less, the ministers of the body every year. In a number so large as that under the direction of the Conference, there must ever be some of mediocre talent; others, who have not only nothing of the popular about their ministrations, but who are positively unacceptable to the people from a variety of circumstances, by no means implying personal blame; and a few too, perhaps, who, with talent, learning, and ministerial accomplishment, have, nevertheless, something about them, it may be for some wise end in their heavenly Father's discipline, which keeps them in the shade. Now, amongst these and other classes, the weakness is often exhibited of a self-apprecia-

* Note C.

tion altogether at variance with the estimate formed by others. They think themselves possessed of abilities and adaptations which others either fail to perceive, or are utterly unable to discern. It is not once in a life-time that they deem a mistake made respecting them ; but, year by year, they suppose the mistake repeated in the appointments which they receive.

Again, in a wide-spread Connexion such as ours, covering, as it does, every county in the kingdom, there is some difference in the localities of labour. Some are accounted more comfortable, more honourable, or, on some other ground, more desirable than others. No doubt, very exaggerated ideas are often formed respecting the diversities which obtain in circuits, as the experience of those who have passed through all grades in the Connexion will abundantly corroborate. Each sphere of labour possesses advantages as well as trials which are peculiarly its own. Yet it may not be denied that there are differences. As in the same town it might be found to be more agreeable to ply a busy trade in one street rather than in another, so in Methodism it may be more pleasant to work for Christ

and His people in a circuit in a city, rather than in one situated in a dreary, distant, thinly peopled district. Preferences thus arise, and it becomes an object aimed at by some, in one way or another, to secure stations which are thought the most desirable.* By some, this matter has been carried so far as to lead them to think and to speak of portions of Christ's Church, and of the care of saints dear to Him there, as penal settlements. Terrible insult and faithlessness this, to the great Bishop of souls! Surely, if the true aspects of such conceptions were realised, thoughts and phraseology so unworthy and so sinful would never more be found in the mind or on the lips of a follower and minister of Him, who "though He was rich," "became poor," that we "through His poverty might be rich."†

Now, putting the two facts to which we have adverted together, and then remembering what human nature is, it must be obvious that unless great grace be imparted, a rife and rank crop of dissatisfaction and discontent will gather and grow, year by year, in the ministry, by the very working out of itinerancy.

* Note D.

† 1 Corinthians viii. 9.

Turning from the itinerancy as it affects the ministry, look at it as it operates in circuits. A minister, personally unknown to the people among whom he has to labour, reaches his appointed sphere, and what, in times of commotion, has he to meet? The members of his charge are broken up into little bands of from six to twenty, or more, under the care of leaders who have met them weekly, from year to year; who live amongst them, and who are, more or less, intimately acquainted with their history and peculiarities. A great influence has thus been acquired by leaders over the members of a circuit committed to the pastoral care of the minister, long before he comes amongst them. Ministers, too, one or more, may have preceded him in that circuit, who, ill at ease with themselves, and discontented with the vicissitudes of itinerancy, have adopted opinions antagonistic to the system under which they once were brought nigh to God, and by which they were introduced into the Christian ministry. These ministers, unfaithful to their trust, have made confidants of some of the leaders, and have injected into their minds the adverse influences operating within their own bosoms.

By such means as these an immense amount of undefined dissatisfaction lies, corrupting individuals amongst the leaders, and preparing them to wield the influence which they have acquired over their classes against pastoral oversight, should any circumstance arise to call forth opposition.

Besides the abiding influence of the leadership, which may be brought to bear against the pastor of a circuit, there is also that of the body of lay preachers, who have also lived and laboured for years in the same localities. Many occasions of offence may occur to these functionaries, in the appointments given to them on the Quarterly Plan. For as it is with circuits, so is it with places in every circuit; there are some which are specially coveted, and that very often by those least able adequately to supply them. Then there are temptations occurring to the local preachers, in various ways, to erect themselves into an order, in opposition to the regularly appointed and fully authorised ministry. They preach without any pecuniary remuneration—why is not the same consideration everywhere given to them as that usually accorded to the paid pastor? Again, surmises come to be

indulged, that the latter has sought to lower the position of the former; and, by way of reprisal, the local preacher seeks, by deprecatory remarks, to impair the acceptability, and to injure the usefulness of the itinerant. Besides all this, unless a very close walk with God be maintained, there is much peril peculiar to the vocation of a local preacher. He is probably in the commencement of his course, young in years; engaged busily, all the week, in the ordinary avocations of life, with little opportunity for study, he is called, Sabbath after Sabbath, to preach to others; and is thus, comparatively, seldom favoured with the privilege of attending public worship as a learner. Can any position be conceived, in which the danger is more imminent of a rapid growth of those fearful evils which the Apostle includes within that significant phrase, "the lusts of the mind?" And let such evils but arise, and the office affords opportunities for inflicting an untold amount of mischief, not only on the individual himself, but amongst the people where he labours, most adverse to the maintenance of "godly quiet," and the advancement of spiritual religion.

Consider, then, the following points:—That a

disaffected minister is not confined to one locality, but moves about, from circuit to circuit, every one or two years. That in every circuit to which he goes he can get the ear, and may prejudice the minds, of many, who have peculiar advantages secured them by their offices for estranging, if so inclined, the people from their faithful pastors. That itinerancy has the disadvantage of preventing its true ministers from acquiring the individual influence which lengthened faithful labour and consistent Christian character in one locality would assuredly command. And, lastly, that with the manifold offices of Methodism there is the requisition for vast numbers of officers, whilst the supply for filling them up afforded by the societies, freshly gathered, as they continually are, out of nature's quarries, is altogether inadequate. Now, putting these facts together, with other inconveniences and disadvantages which will readily occur from their consideration, the wonder is, not that secessions have been so frequent or so numerous, but that they have been so few, and, on the whole, so uninfluential. Had other religious denominations possessed as many weak points in their respective organisations as the system of

Methodism presents, it is much to be doubted, looking to the state of spiritual religion among them, if they had been able to stand at all.

But the arrangements to which we have adverted as affording facilities for the growth and development of dissatisfaction, in its various stages, until it reaches hostility, and breaks out in schism, are, after all, amongst the chief instrumentalities in insuring those successes, unparalleled in the Church since apostolic times, which have attended the operations of Methodism. Next to the harmonious scriptural system of doctrine held, there can be no doubt that the practical bearing and general efficiency secured by an itinerant and converted ministry, and the multiplied agencies of the leadership and lay preaching, have, with God's blessing, conserved the great work commenced by Him through the conversion and labours of the Wesleys. Without these, the spirituality, elasticity, and vigour of Methodistic operation and result, we fully believe, would soon fail. If Methodism is to continue to flourish, there must be maintained, in unimpaired vigour, these three things:—First, The scriptural, heart-searching, plain, practical preaching of the Word, with that

evangelistic fervour, which, it would seem, from the records of experience, can best, and on the largest scale, be perpetuated by an unlocated ministry. Secondly, The gathering into classes of the people brought to the knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus," there to be folded from the snares and temptations to which, in a world like ours, a life of faith must ever be exposed. And, thirdly, The permeating of the masses of our village and suburban populations with the Gospel, by agencies sufficiently numerous, and which can be wisely and economically secured by a well-ordered system of lay preaching, in conjunction with, and in subordination to, our Lord's positive appointment of a separated and well-equipped ministry.

Hitherto, these have been maintained in unimpaired purity and power. And as the result, Methodism has been found, after each secession, putting forth larger efforts to fulfil its mission than it did before they occurred. There came the Kilhamite division; and, after it, Methodism awoke to its responsibilities to preach the Gospel to every creature; and, with an energy unsurpassed by any, it went forth to plant the standard

of the Cross all the world round, so that what has been said of our Queen's dominions may now, in truth, be said of the Wesleyan missionary stations—"The sun never sets upon them." Then, within four years after the Warrenite schism, came the great Centenary movement, when a people, grateful to God for what He had done for them, spontaneously presented an offering of £220,000 on "that altar which sanctifieth the gift." And now, in the near ending of the third, and largest in point of numbers, though (at once we express our decided conviction that it will be found) the least influential, most evanescent, of all the Methodist schisms to which we have been subjected, we find the Connexion entering, with true earnestness, on the great work of educating the children of its people—instituting, for that object, a new and additional fund, besides raising a thoroughly complete Training Establishment for the instruction of one hundred teachers, with its accompanying complement of practising schools, at a cost of between £30,000 and £40,000.

While we make statements such as these, we would not do it vain-gloriously, in the spirit of him of old, who, complacently beholding what

he deemed his own, impiously exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built . . . by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"* Oh, no; if we name these things, it is to the alone praise of Him who hath "given us the power" to accomplish that amount of work, which, by His mercy and grace, now stands patent alike to friend and foe. In the midst of it all, we have been, at the best, but unfaithful stewards; and humiliation of soul is ours, that with such vast bestowments of heavenly treasure we have done so little, compared with what we might have accomplished.

From the remarks already made, it will have been inferred that we are of opinion that the secessions adverted to have tended to the advantage of the body as a whole. This, we think, might be demonstrated. In a Connexion not made up of proselytes from other communities, but which is only sustained by aggressions on the world of the wicked—ever gathering its followers from the ignorant and the outcast—many are necessarily brought, for a time, into our fellowship, with whom, both on their account

* Daniel iv. 30.

and our own, it is best that, sooner or later, what took place between Abraham and Lot, should occur between us. But separations need not become schisms. Men might learn to differ, and yet be brethren. When, however, a man, or a number of men, come into a community, and by its instrumentality get whatever of spiritual good they have received, endeavour to take advantage of such position to introduce principles and practices at variance with those which have ever obtained in that community, then if they will not quietly and Christianly leave, there is no alternative but to force a disjunction. Such a course of procedure is absolutely necessary, and fastens the sin of schism on the separated party. No man would ever be allowed to discuss and agitate Presbyterian principles in a Congregational meeting, or Episcopacy in a Presbyterian church. Such a course would at once be put down, and no one would blame the procedure. But only let a man be put away for attempting to introduce New Connexionalism, or Associationism, or Congregationalism, into the old Methodist body, and then, with most indecent interference, the whole dissenting press takes up the matter, repeats, and

makes its own, falsehoods which have again and again been rebutted, gives mouth to a senseless clamour against the bondage of the Methodists and the tyranny of their ministers, and does its best to injure a body that never in any way interfered with or sought to damage the dissenting interest, as it is called.*

But if Methodism, as a whole, is benefited by the painful discipline through which these outbreaks cause her to pass, it is not so with the individuals involved in the sinful procedure to which we have already called attention. Most calamitous are the results to these. We have ourselves met with not a few who have made shipwreck of faith, of character, of position, in the storms of agitation. They soon found out that the course on which they had entered and the laws of Christ were in a state of antagonism ; but refusing to humble themselves before God, and penitently to seek restoration to the fold whence they had wandered, or been led away, they went from bad to worse, and lost themselves. Well would it be for many of these, if they would yet prayerfully put that pertinent question found

* Note E.

in the admirable Pastoral Address of the last Conference,—how all this “will be reviewed in a calmer day? How, seven years hence? How, when” they “stand on the banks of Jordan, in the near prospect of unchangeable realities.” *

With the individual aspect of contention and division full before us, who is there that does not devoutly wish that such tremendous evils could be averted? To this most Christian desire is to be attributed, in no small degree, the activity of men’s minds, in a period of agitation, to discover, if possible, some remedial measures. Hence, at a recent meeting of laymen, called together by the President of last year, we had some scores of proposals. But there was one very striking feature about the suggestions then offered, which will have struck the observant. No attempt was made to show how the changes proposed would operate in providing a remedy for the evils deplored. Suppose that every alteration suggested at that meeting had been in actual operation at the Conference of 1849, is there any man who believes that these would have hindered the schismatics of that year from taking the course

* Minutes for 1850, page 200.

which they did, or have prevented the outbreak of sin and folly which in different parts of the Connexion has ensued? We, at least, do not. And if the source of our mischiefs lie where we have already indicated they do, it is in vain to look for any measure which will entirely prevent such eruptions in a condition of the Church, where, do what you may, the tares and the wheat must grow together.

Is it, then, a hopeless and helpless necessity of the aggressions which Methodism makes on the ungodly, that, after the lapse of every few years, she is to be racked by dissension, and hindered from doing, for a time, her proper work in a dying world? We think not; and it may now be proper to suggest such alterations as have occurred to our own mind as likely to mitigate, if not entirely to prevent, the return of schism, at least on the scale of past occurrences of this nature.

In the days of our Founder there happened no such separations as his followers have had to mourn over since his death. True, there were several individual outbreaks, but these were, at once, put down, by the all-pervading and wakeful oversight and energy of John Wesley. No wide-

spread schism ever sprang up in his day. The secret, as it seems to us, of his being enabled to keep the United Societies, as a whole, even to the end of his course, in peace, was the purpose which he formed and executed of keeping every man in his proper place, and at his proper work. As the wants and exigences of the revival of religion which he was instrumental in awakening were providentially indicated to him, he met them; and there arose, successively, classes and leaders, and the weekly and quarterly contribution, and lay preaching, and a separated ministry, and the Conference. In his day, he kept members and officers to those proper objects of their confederation which are, indeed, the only appropriate business of any true ecclesiastical arrangement, viz., the saving of their own souls, and the accomplishment of as much good in the world, as each had grace and opportunity given to accomplish. Whatever arrangements, of the nature of scaffolding to a building, this superstructure of godliness and godly effort required, either to prevent abuse or to stay neglect, were promptly adopted, and were very simple and fully adequate to their purpose. When we view the system as he left it, one

cannot but be struck with its ample and yet unpretending details. While he lived, for instance, the leaders and local preachers were alone allowed to do that for which they had received grace and qualification.* He never permitted them to assume legislative or judicial functions. In fact, Methodism, as framed by Mr. Wesley, was a religious Society, having had its arrangements made, at different periods, with the intention that it should remain in union with the Church of England.† This, however, it is evident, Mr. Wesley, as he drew near the end of his career, saw was a state of matters which could not be maintained, —in consequence, first, of the intolerant bearing of the authorities in that Church towards himself and the members of his Society; and, secondly, because of the alienation which had generally been produced by the treatment which they everywhere, with few exceptions, met with from the clergy. Arriving at this conclusion, he executed his Poll-deed, giving legality and permanence to his own Institute.

The providential circumstances in which the Conference found itself, after Mr. Wesley's death,

* Note F.

† Note G.

called for its members to take further steps in the direction already indicated to them by Mr. Wesley's own procedure. And accordingly, year after year, regulations were introduced, by which the Society form diminished, until at length a fully equipped Church occupied its place.

The difficulties attendant upon these movements were very great. Much wisdom from above was evidently needed, and it was eminently given to the men placed by God at the head of affairs ; so that, in looking back on the course pursued down to 1835, when the last additions, of any importance, were made to our ecclesiastical arrangements, we cannot fail to mark the consummate ability with which difficulties were met, and the platform of our system safely laid.*

It has, however, always appeared to us, that the fathers of 1795 and 1797 made a mistake, either in not retaining, in its integrity, the Institute as Mr. Wesley left it, or in not dealing with the questions brought before them somewhat more largely than they did. In other words, we think that, either the Society form should have been continued without alteration, or a more

* Note H.

complete Church organisation ought to have been adopted. This is our opinion, from the standpoint we now occupy. In all probability, it would have been somewhat different, had we lived in their days.

We now proceed to propose the organisation which meets our present views, which we think the requirements of the present state of society demand, and which would tend, with God's blessing, to put down amongst us the two evils, the existence of which we have shown are the occasions of our schisms, viz.—ministerial dissatisfaction and lay antagonism. In doing so, we adhere to the great principles which have been clearly eliminated and fully established by the wisdom and experience of bygone days, and from which there may be no departure.

In prosecuting, very briefly, and with little argument, our task, it may be right, in the first place, to lay down some points, as to principles, which we hold to have been settled and determined, and also some facts which have now become matters of history.

First. Although meeting in class has ever been a condition of membership in the United

Societies, yet the rules containing the terms of admission to the Lord's Supper,—the divinely-appointed and accredited token, in all Protestant churches, of church-fellowship,—allow others, not members of Society, to partake of that sacrament, on receiving "a note of admission from the superintendent" (or the preacher administering); which "note" was to "be renewed quarterly." * In Scotland, we know that Mr. Wesley formed a Church on somewhat of a Presbyterian basis, and commanded his preachers there regularly to admit communicants, on their making a creditable Christian profession, without insisting on their meeting in the Society-classes. This appointment having fallen into desuetude, it will be remembered that it was recently revived by the regulations for Scotland, passed, we believe, by the Conference of 1842.

Secondly. The administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, according to the "Articles of Agreement for General Pacification," was limited to the families of the members of our own Society;† and the rule, still unrepealed, respecting the Lord's Supper, is as follows:—"No person shall be

* Large Minutes. † See Article 7, Minutes, i. 323. Also, note I.

suffered, on any pretence, to partake of the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a member of Society, or receive a note of admission from the superintendent (or the preacher administering); which note must be renewed quarterly. And if our leaders, stewards or trustees refuse to be regulated by the rule, the sacrament shall not be administered when this is the case." *

Thirdly. While the Conference has ever regarded itself bound to maintain the pastoral office in unimpaired integrity, and to uphold the spiritual authority which is appropriate to that office, and necessary to the execution of the duties which Christ has made imperative on all those who sustain it, yet, in the admission and expulsion of members, it regulated and limited the power of the pastorate by various rules, in favour of bringing the lay element into such matters, passed in 1795,† and 1797,‡ and by the additional guards and securities of 1835.§ By these regulations, leaders, as leaders, have acquired a power which, up to the first-named year, they never possessed, and never exercised. ||

* Large Minutes.

† Minutes, i. 299.

‡ Ibid. p. 375.

§ Ibid. vii. 581, 582.

|| Note H.

Fourthly. In the arrangement made for Scotland by Mr. Wesley, to which allusion has already been made, an office corresponding, in some respects, to that of the ruling eldership in the Presbyterian churches, was instituted.

Fifthly. While Connexionalism, as opposed to Independency, has been maintained, the management of local affairs has been entrusted to local authorities, subject always, on the above distinctive principle, to the general laws and usages of the body, and to the appellate jurisdiction of the District Committee and of the Conference.

Sixthly. The Conference must always consist, as constituted by the Deed-poll, bearing date 28th Feb. 1784, enrolled in Chancery, March 9th, of the same year, and held to have been valid by the highest Courts in the land, as we know, to use Mr. Wesley's own words, it had "always consisted"—of the ministers of the Connexion, and must continue to be perpetuated in terms of the provisions of the above deed. The Conference so constituted has imposed upon it the solemn trust of preserving, in their integrity, the doctrines and discipline of Methodism, as settled by our Founder; and is possessed of the power over preachers

and people in union with it, which he theretofore exercised in the Conferences which he himself held, in conjunction with such preachers as he invited to meet him for consultation. There can never be any law binding upon preachers or people in our Connexion, unless made by the Conference. This arrangement was established by our Founder, not by the Conference, as is evident from the testatum of the said Deed-poll, in which not only the history of its formation and the business that had been transacted is narrated, but a definition given of what the Conference was to be and to do, in all time to come. And *inter alia*, not only were such matters as had reference to the ministry to be gone about as they had been, but also "all other matters" were to continue "to be transacted and done," which "had year by year been printed and published under the title of Minutes of the Conference."* For the meaning of this clause, reference must be had to the Minutes of the Conference, published prior to Mr. Wesley's death; and from such an examination it will at once be apparent, that the jurisdiction of the Conference extended over every person

* See Deed-poll. Note H.

and department in the Connexion. Unlimited and uncontrolled as this jurisdiction was, the Conference itself, and of its own accord, from 1797, has acted upon the following rule, viz.:—

“That if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the Societies at large, and such rule should be objected to, at the first quarterly meeting in any given circuit; and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion, that the enforcing of such rule in that circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that circuit; it shall not be enforced, in opposition to the judgment of such quarterly meeting, before the second Conference. But, if the rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion.” *

And, in later years, provision has been made for the full and fair exertion of lay influence in all matters, temporal and financial. This change was chiefly, if not entirely, procured through the instrumentality of an eminently distinguished but much maligned man, who has ever been the advocate of popular rights in

* Minutes, vol. i., page 376. Note H.

accordance with New Testament precept, and who, to the great regret of his brethren, retired from prominent public service, at the last Conference. By the regulations referred to, the Connexional Funds are managed by mixed committees, consisting of ministers and laymen ; the lay members of which are elected, in the instance of the General Chapel, the Contingent, and Children's Funds, by either district or quarterly meetings, in all which there are lay members present and concurrent.

Seventhly. To the Conference can alone belong the determination of the conditions of ministerial recognition. For the conservation of the purity and efficiency of the ministry, oversight on the part of Superintendents over colleagues, Districts over both, and the Conference over all, has ever been maintained. Mr. Wesley exercised personal supervision over every preacher in his days ; and now, in the case of solitary stations, the chairmen of Districts are possessed of a visitorial power ; while abroad, a General Superintendency is vested in one minister over several districts, with their respective chairmen. And the President of the Conference is not merely the chairman of that assembly, but occupies a position of influence and

authority, which constitutes him the directing head of the Connexion, during the interval between one Conference and another.

Eighthly. In one instance, at least, in the proposal made to the Conference of 1806, for the improvement of young preachers, "the heads of the plan" were directed by that Conference "to be sent to every preacher," that the brethren might have "the opportunity of considering them maturely at the" then next "District meetings," and of reporting "their collective judgment concerning it to the" following "Conference." *

Ninthly. The Conference, by its District committees, has always exercised a discretionary power over the number of ministers permitted to attend the Conference, the legal members only possessing the right to be there.

And, lastly. While, by the Deed-poll already named, no minister is to be appointed for more than three years to any chapel settled upon the trusts therein referred to, yet an exception is made in favour of ordained ministers of the Church of England.†

Founding generally upon these established

* Minutes, vol. ii., page 349. † See Deed-poll. Note H.

principles and facts, we would make the following proposals :—

I.

That the basis of membership in our body be enlarged. That the creditable profession of religion be deemed sufficient to entitle any to be enrolled in our fellowship. This would, of course, determine that meeting in class should be no longer imperatively enjoined upon all. At the same time, we would make the most stringent provision that every effort should be put forth to lead people into that state of mind and experience which would make such a meeting a privilege, prized and precious. No one can hold more strongly than we ourselves do, the inestimable advantage which such a means of grace affords to a man "working out his own salvation." * We believe, that for the lack of such an aid, multitudes miss their way to the kingdoms both of grace and glory. But still, as we do not find attendance upon such means laid down in God's word as a term of communion; and as we have

* Philippians ii. 12.

met with not a few, to whom, from mental peculiarities and other causes, these means of grace seemed unsuited, we think that the time has come to make a change. We would now adopt in England that plan, which, while sincerely administered in Scotland during Mr. Wesley's life-time and by his appointment, succeeded there, not in superseding the class meeting, but in raising up for it a supply of spiritual people, who seldom were found blacksliding, either in heart or life, from the faith and the hope of the Gospel.

As such a proposal as this may be viewed with some alarm, it may be well, at once, to advert to Mr. Wesley's own estimate of this very important means of grace, as it is given at large in his "Plain Account of the Methodists." * He there properly views it as a "prudential regulation;" as "not essential, not of Divine institution;" while he, nevertheless, rightly maintains that there is not only "no Scripture against it," but that "there is much Scripture for it,—even all those texts which enjoin the substance of the various duties, whereof this is only an indifferent circumstance, to be determined by reason and experience."†

* Wesley's Works, 1810, vol. vi., pp. 287, 288. † Ibid. p. 288.

In the position in which Mr. Wesley places the ordinance of class meeting, we would have it. But, seeing that we have long ceased, as a body, to be a mere Society in connexion with another ecclesiastical arrangement, we ought, we think, to provide for the due reception of all who may wish to be members of our communion, on the broad catholic basis we have laid down. As a Society, it might be right and proper to make conformity to a human appointment imperative upon all who sought our fellowship; but as a Church, admitting, by the sacrament of baptism, children into our portion of Christ's visible fold, it does not seem to us that our present practice admits of very easy or scriptural defence. We, at least, can make out no tenable grounds on which compliance with "an indifferent circumstance" can be rigidly insisted upon, and exacted from all who have been so baptised, in order to their fulfilment of baptismal obligation, and union with our Church. The more especially does this appear to be difficult, when it is considered that that "circumstance" is not enjoined upon them by any law of the Great Head of the Church; and some of them might take excep-

tion to it, on reasons which to them might appear irrefragable.

We are free to admit, that should this change ever be adopted, great care will be needed to prevent declension in grace, and the substitution of a bare and formal profession for the life and power of godliness. But surely no such result need be inevitable. With the inestimable advantages which are ours, it is not easy to conceive how such sad consequences could readily be reached, except on the supposition of a universal corruption among us, as yet without parallel in any branch of the Church catholic. Think of our converted ministry, our eminently practical and experimental theology, and the embalmment of all the phases of a life of faith in the large biographical stores of our body. These instrumentalities, accompanied and applied by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, will conserve a pure Methodism. On the strength of our Saviour's undying promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"* we may unhesitatingly rely. That Spirit will continue to perpetuate a scriptural holiness in the souls

* Matthew xxviii. 20.

and lives of pardoned and regenerated men. We have thus a firm persuasion, that laying such a New Testament platform as we desiderate, will but tend to ensure to Methodism a perpetuity lasting as the sun.

Should our convictions on this head ever obtain among us, it will be easy to draw up regulations for the admission and oversight of such members. It will not be difficult to adjust, for instance, such matters as the following, viz., the initiatory steps to be taken by the pastors on their admission; the way in which the roll containing their names and addresses is to be kept; the method by which a periodical investigation into their continued fitness for membership is to be conducted; and the plan by which their weekly and quarterly contributions may be obtained towards the support of God's cause, as in the case of members meeting in class. With such an extension of membership as we contemplate, it might be wise and safe to include, amongst the provisions for dealing with candidates for our communion, some rule by which it should be made imperative on the pastors publicly to announce their names, callings, and residences, in the Church and Society meeting held

nearest the locality where they reside, with intimation that should any one, of their own knowledge, be aware of any let or hindrance to their admission, the same may be notified in private, and dealt with as the case may require.

It may not, perhaps, be inappropriate in this connection to observe, that for the purpose of maintaining the purity of our Churches, and the Societies connected with them, and further to enable us to keep up before our people the broad demarcation between the world and the Church, everywhere apparent in the New Testament, most stringent regulations should be laid down respecting the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. These ordinances belong not to any but the members of Christ's visible church, and to such only should they be administered. We fear there has been—in consequence, it may be, of the peculiar term of membership in our Society—no small amount of laxity, especially of later years, on this important point; and which, as it seems to us, has been one source of that fearful growth of antinomianism over which we have had to sorrow.

II.

We would restore the leadership, and the body of lay preachers, with their respective meetings, and the quarterly meetings of circuits, very much to their primitive functions, keeping them entirely to the administrative, and altogether away from those judicial and legislative faculties which, since Mr. Wesley's death, have been given to them.

The leadership is too promiscuous a body to be safely entrusted with the powers which they possess. The Great Head of the Church gives to comparatively few those endowments which fit and qualify for the right exercise of duties judicial and legislative; and that, for this obvious reason,—that these are secondary and subordinate to the great objects of Christian fellowship. All may acquire fitness for the exercises appropriate to the latter; and a Church's arrangements only approach to perfectness as they are adapted to facilitate their cultivation and maturity. Multitudes of saved men can, most appositely and profitably, speak of the experiences of a life of faith, and engage in all the utterances of praise

and prayer, and perform the ten thousand charities of an active Christian course. But the adaptations which qualify for these main and lofty engagements are far different from those requirements which enable a man to weigh evidence, command ecclesiastical influence, and get at the mind of the Spirit, as revealed in the Word, on those questions of manifold casuistry, with which Church Courts have so often, alas, to deal, in the erring and the wicked.

In Churches nominally constituted on the most democratic principles,—where, if there were adherence to the theory professed, every matter should be determined by the vote of all the members, male and female, young and old, boy and girl,—we find, that either the pastor by himself, or the pastor in the name of the Church, or a select and small committee, do everything of the nature we have adverted to. It requires little experience, especially in seasons of excitement and prevailing agitation, to discover the utter impracticability of submitting questions of ecclesiastical, or sometimes, and in some cases, even of the plainest moral, law, to meetings composed of thirty, forty, sixty, or more members, such as

usually compose our leaders' meetings. Such bodies of men, or portions of them, at least, have often committed themselves to courses which a more limited number, with a felt responsibility given, and accustomed to the conduct of a solemn court of judicature, could never have been brought to do.

Instead, then, of burdening leaders' meetings with what, we believe, as at present constituted, they cannot perform, either to their own satisfaction, or so as to promote the welfare of the flock, we desire the formation, in every circuit, according to the number of its members or the extent of its territory, one or more vestries, to be composed of the pastor or pastors, and such a number of laymen residing within its bounds as may be adequate to represent fully the different lay interests therein.

In order to secure the entire confidence of the circuit in such an appointment, it would be needful to be very careful in the selection of its members. They should be men of unblemished Christian experience and character, godly conversation, circumspect in their walk, punctual in their attendance upon ordinances, and strict in

their observation of the Lord's day, and in regularly keeping up the worship of God in their families ; possessed of gravity and wisdom ; acquainted with, and attached to, the Methodist theology, order, and discipline. Their election or nomination should belong to the vestry ; a dealing having first of all been had with them, in private, by the pastors, to ascertain their grace and gifts, and their willingness to accept of the office. Before their appointment, it might be well either to submit their names to each separate leaders' and local preachers' meeting in the circuit ; or, better still, to the quarterly meetings, (if the constitution of these should come so to be defined as to include, along with stewards and trustees in communion, the members of the above meetings, say, of four years' standing,) the members of which should possess a veto on the nomination.

After passing through this ordeal, it might further be desirable to proclaim their names publicly, in every congregation in the circuit, upon a Sabbath, after the morning service, with admonition to the members in communion, that if any of them know of any cause disqualifying such persons to enter on such a vocation, they

should represent the same to the superintendent pastor, or by his appointment to his colleagues, within, say, eight or fourteen days after such intimation. Should objection be taken, then the pastors should be bound immediately to adopt steps to ascertain the validity of the same; and if unable to satisfy themselves, and the objector or objectors, of the causelessness or frivolousness thereof, it should be reported to the vestry, and dealt with there according to its merits. In the event of no objection being taken, a day might be appointed for the public setting apart, by prayer, of these officers, in one of the principal chapels of the circuit. The accompanying service might be rendered instructive to the members of our Churches, by a presentation to them of the teachings of Scripture on the subject of discipline, and the duties of the officers appointed, together with the submission due from the members of a Church to the discipline appointed by its supreme Lord and Head. These latter might be brought out by requiring answers, from the officers to be appointed, to such questions as the following:—
“Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the

only rule of faith and life? Do you own and believe the whole doctrines contained in the first four volumes of Mr. Wesley's sermons, his notes on the New Testament, and the three Catechisms approved by the Conference, to be the truths of God; and do you take the whole doctrines contained in the same as the confession of your faith? Do you own the purity of worship and means of grace (private and public) authorised and practised in this Church; and are you persuaded that the Methodist government and discipline, as laid down in the Minutes of Conference, are founded upon the Word of God, and agreeable thereto? Do you promise that in your practice you will conform yourself to the said worship and means of grace, and that you will use all Christian endeavours to bring others within the range of your influence to the same mind with yourself? Do you promise that you will submit yourself to the said discipline and government, and cause the members of this Church to do the same, so far as you may be able to accomplish the same; and that you will never endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the said doctrines, worship, discipline and government,

and that you will follow no divisive courses from this Church? Do you accept of the office of a member of the vestry of this circuit; and promise, through grace, faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge the duties thereof?" At the close of the service the newly appointed officers might be formally received, their subscription taken to a solemn declaration, embodying the substance of the above or similar questions, and their names added to the roll of members of vestry. Annually, these members of vestry should undergo an examination of character, life, and continued belief of, and attachment to our doctrines, order, worship, and discipline.

With such or similar precautions to those mentioned above, it is evident that vestries so constituted would secure the confidence of all parties, and form a body to whom, wisely and safely, might be left the discharge of the duties which now devolve upon leaders' and quarterly meetings, in reference to the trial of members, and the whole subjects embraced in the regulations respecting memorialising the Conference. We should here secure an inferior court, holding views and sentiments in harmony with the Methodist

Church at large, and with its Conference. Whatever communication might be sent from such a body, through the District Committee, to the Conference, would be sure to deserve the gravest attention. It would no longer be necessary to retain those guards and checks against strife and ungodly debate, which the promiscuous character of circuit meetings has hitherto required, and which have given some plausible and apparent, although utterly untenable, ground of charge and agitation to those who have gone forth and represented Methodism as a system of bondage and priestcraft.

Suppose such vestries to be formed, to enable them to conduct aright their appropriate business some simple forms of procedure would require to be appointed. Hitherto, perhaps, disciplinary matters among us have been proceeded with too informally. While the Connexion remained, comparatively, few numerically and uninfluential, the ends of Christian discipline were probably best secured by the familiar, family-kind of treatment which they received. Having outgrown our early state, and having now become an object of attention to other Churches, and to the world,

it would seem to be one condition of our altered position, if we would take away a prevalent source of grievous misrepresentation, that we must establish a uniform order of procedure. Undue importance, no doubt, may be attached to forms, and nothing is more pitiable than a mind which is wholly engrossed with their minute observance. But forms are treated unjustly when contempt is poured on them, and when they are held to be of no importance. In large bodies, whose procedure is subject to review, they are necessary for the orderly conducting of business, and inseparable from it. Let the attempt be made to dispense with them, and either it will be found impossible to proceed, or, unconsciously on the part of those who have made the attempt, recourse will be had to forms of some kind or other. They are necessary even for attaining the ends desired. When there is no fixed mode of procedure, and questions are taken up at will, parties labour under great disadvantages; there is no security against caprice or arbitrary measures, and there is much danger of decisions being given inconsiderately, and under the influence of the feelings of the moment. Irksome as it may sometimes be to observe esta-

blished forms of procedure, a strict attention to them, it is believed, would tend to secure consistency in the decisions come to, and a corresponding respect for the same, on the part both of those immediately concerned, and of on-lookers in general.

And here, in order to prevent misunderstanding, we had better at once state, that by our proposal for the formation of circuit vestries we do not, for one moment, contemplate that they are to become substitutes for ministerial duty and responsibility, or that their decisions are to be final and ultimate, or that they are to interfere with the proper business, as we hold it, of trustee, leaders', local preachers', and quarterly meetings.

So far as circuit meetings are concerned, vestries would only take cognisance of the members of those meetings, as matters of complaint were brought against them, either in their personal or official character. They would not interfere with the Christian discharge of their respective functions. The trustees, for instance, would still have the management of the property vested in them, on terms of their respective trusts. The authority of the vestry over them as trustees would only

be to take means to compel a fulfilment of their trusts, if there should be any attempted dereliction. So also with the leaders. They would continue to transact the business belonging to their respective Societies. They would still exercise their present rights in the appointment of stewards and leaders, meet with ministers and stewards in order to give information of any of the members who are sick, or walk disorderly and will not be reproved, dispense the poor funds, present their class-books, and make their payments. The vestry would only deal with the recusant members of these meetings. The local preachers, too, would be convened as usual in their own meetings, and discharge the duties which hitherto they have done. And the quarterly meetings would continue to attend to the financial affairs of the circuit, the building of chapels, the recommendation of candidates for the ministry, the petitioning for the appointment of ministers, and the appointment of their stewards. Indeed, the only change which we would make, in reference to the quarterly meetings, would be to rescind the law giving them a veto on new laws made by the Conference. And, in lieu thereof, to give them the power to elect from the circuit

stewards, and from the vestry of the circuit, one or more commissioners, according to the number of ministers stationed in the circuit, to represent the circuit in the District Committee, there to act in accordance with a proposal which we have yet to make, in reference to the new laws and enactments of the Conference.

Then we would give the right of appeal to all parties from the decisions of the vestry to the District Committee, and thence to the Conference. It is very evident, that Independency can never work in union with Connexionalism. Moreover, we believe it to be of easy demonstration, that the former would not only cripple the progress of Christ's cause, but that it is directly opposed to the clear teachings and precedents which we have in the New Testament. But were it not so,—as Methodism has always been united, and never divided into parts independent in action, any attempt to alter this fundamental principle would be an innovation incompatible with an itinerant ministry, and the present privileges of membership. Ministers among us could no longer retain their allegiance to Christ, and fidelity in the discharge of their duties to His Church, if, while compelled

by an itinerancy to go wherever they were sent, they were not assured that, in all the fields of labour to which they might be appointed, there was a power greater than that of a mere local character, to ensure obedience to every law of Christ. And members, if they would retain the privileges of membership in every part of our wide-spread Connexion, must remain under not only the local, but general jurisdiction of the body.*

And, once again, it would be utterly inconsistent with the positive law of Christ, as authoritatively laid down in His Word, for the ministry to transfer its duties to the vestry. No man, and no number of men, can occupy the place of the minister, or bear his responsibilities. He is accountable directly to the Great Head of the Church. But, at the same time, it is right that such guides and guards should be afforded him in the discharge of his onerous duties, as the opinion and counsel of such a court as the vestry we have proposed would secure. Every true minister of Christ desires, above all things, to be enabled to render his account with joy, when his Great Master calls him to His bar. He

* Note K.

would not, then, be "saved as by fire;" but he would have his "work" to "abide," that he may "receive a reward."* But then there is much that may perplex him in the course of ministerial duty. He is liable to err in judgment. He, therefore, is but too glad to avail himself of any help which may serve to preserve him from mistake. Such an aid, we humbly think, a vestry, formed as we have indicated, would prove; controlled, as it would be, by the superior appellate judicatories of Methodism. In regard to the trials of members, the vestry would have to deal, first, with the relevancy of the charge made; and secondly, with the evidence given in its support. Having determined the guilt of the party, it would then remain a part of its duty to advise with the pastors as to the character of criminality, and the kind of discipline to be employed, although it would still leave to the superintendent minister the responsibility of the final award. If Christ's law, as laid down in the New Testament, be followed, it is believed that a difference of judgment would seldom, if ever, be found existing between the

* See 1 Cor. iii. 1—17.

ministers and the other members of the vestry. Certain we are, that no prayerful means ought to be left untried to bring about this end ; and that especially for the great purpose of securing the religious uses of discipline. The object of discipline in Christ's Church is not punitive ; it is remedial. And, in order to bring the offender to repentance, it is obviously of great importance that there should be, if practicable, unanimity of judgment on the part of those engaged in the solemn work of subjecting him to the proceedings of a Court of Christ's Church. For the end, too, of general benefit, and to secure universal confidence, it might be proper to leave it to the option of the vestry to allow of the attendance of the leaders and local preachers at the trial of any belonging to the Societies or meetings of which they are members.*

III.

We would secure a more direct and constant oversight of the ministry in the circuits, during the intervals of the Conference.

* Note M.

With all the advantages which an itinerancy secures to the people, there are some drawbacks connected with it. "Many men, many minds," is an old adage; and abundant illustrations of its exhibition might be found in the repeated changes which successive ministers have introduced into circuits. Some alterations have, doubtless, been for benefit; but the introduction, even of beneficial changes, has sometimes given rise to heart-burnings, which years have scarcely failed to remove; while others have been of doubtful utility; and many more have been withdrawn or re-altered almost as soon as introduced. Then there have been great diversities of judgment and procedure in the administration of discipline, and in the interpretation even of written law.

Besides, it is easy to conceive, that the number of duties now devolving upon the ministry may lead to frequent inattention to some, and omission of other parts of the sacred calling; or we may suppose that residence, for one, two, or at most three years, merely, in a given sphere of labour, may become very unfavourable, in some mental constitutions, to the proper and necessary development of the evangelistic efforts of a true Christian

ministry. Great may possibly become the temptation to some, which itinerancy may present, of perfunctorily "doing duty," as it is phrased. There may come to be such men in our ranks as unzealous, unevangelistic ministers. These may not neglect their share of the work in a circuit, but then they may do as little as they possibly can, and that little apparently without heart. If any circuit to which such labourers were sent should dismiss them, there would be, annually, other circuits provided for them ; and thus they might drag on their course, doing nothing directly against the Methodism they professed, but certainly doing nothing for it. Moreover, there may come to belong to our ministry one or more who may inflict a positive injury on the cause of Christ wherever they go, and yet in so insidious a manner, that for a length of time, with our present mode of operation, they might manage to escape detection.

On these, and other grounds having reference to our system of superintendency and colleagueship, which will readily occur to the thoughtful, we suggest the necessity of a provision for a direct, all-pervading, and continued ministerial oversight

of the ministers of our body. If this should obtain, it must of course be exercised by some of the experienced, wise, judicious fathers of the Connexion, to whom God may have specially imparted the gifts and grace for such an office, and who possess the confidence and veneration of our whole Church.

Retaining the present division of our Connexion into districts, and the present arrangements respecting their chairmen, we would apportion the same into some six or more general superintendencies. We would place over each of these superintendencies a minister of the character and attainments we have named, who should be invested with full visitorial and monitorial power within the bounds of his superintendency. But while we would thus provide for an efficient oversight of our collective ministry on the one hand, we would, on the other, secure to the humblest pastor among us protection from an undue and improper exercise of power, by making these general superintendents fully amenable to the Conference for every act they performed.

In order to enable such general superintendents to acquire adequate knowledge, and to possess

the influence necessary for the due discharge of their duties, their appointment should be *aut vita aut culpa*. At the same time, it might be necessary to adopt some plan, by which these appointments, while continuing in the Conference, should be made to reflect the voice of the Connexion; or, at least, that portion of it over which the superintendency of each was to extend.

The expense attending such an arrangement might, very appropriately, form an object deserving of adequate endowment by the wealthy of our Connexion; or, until that take place, it might be laid upon the circuits included in the respective superintendencies. It is believed, that the advantages of such oversight to circuits would soon become so apparent, that the comparatively small addition which this provision would make to their annual expenditure, would be most cheerfully met.

In order to bring such an arrangement into efficient operation, it would be necessary for every superintendent, in conjunction with his colleagues, to transmit quarterly, to the general superintendent to whom he may be subject, along

with the circuit plan, an accurate statement of the circuit statistics; the preachers', trustee, and committee meetings attended by himself and colleagues; the changes which may have taken place in the officers; the cases of discipline which had occurred; the differences of opinion, if any, which may have taken place amongst the pastorate, in the administration of affairs; the alterations which were proposed to be made in any department of service in the circuit; the condition of the trust estates, schools, &c.; the proceedings of the quarterly meetings; the attention paid to pastoral visitation; and, indeed, information of every circumstance which might serve to present a view of the actual condition and working of the circuit. To bring out these particulars, schedules, containing these and other points, should be carefully prepared; and it might be as well to require such schedules to be duly filled up by the superintendents at a preachers' meeting, to be held within two days of each quarterly meeting, and to have them attested by their own and their colleagues' signatures.

The whole of the information thus communicated to the general superintendent should be

carefully preserved, and quarterly summaries made of the same by a young probationary minister, who might be appointed yearly to render assistance to the general superintendent. Besides serving the immediate ends desired, the framing of such documents would provide for the keeping of a permanent record of the progress of God's work throughout the Connexion of great value.

The advantages which such a systematic course of procedure would secure, if judiciously carried out, would be inestimable. By it might be obtained, to a considerable extent, the efficiency, harmony, and uniformity of operation, in circuits by an itinerancy, which usually attends a permanent ministry in other Churches.

Not only would evils be prevented by the paternal monitions of such general superintendents as we long to see over us "in the Lord," but the visitorial power which they would exercise would tend to procure for our circuits the very benefits which a well-conducted visitation by inspectors secures for schools. While an ignorant or thoughtless zeal would be kept in wholesome check, encouragement would be given

to wise and well-considered schemes of extension and aggression.

Further, by the plan of general superintendency now indicated, it would be easy to introduce a method of apportioning to circuits the ministers of our Church more satisfactory than that which now obtains. Instead of the present plan of forming "the Stationing Committee," we would suggest that the general superintendents should do the work which it has hitherto done. From their proposed position, it is obvious that they would possess that thorough knowledge of both ministers and circuits, which would make a united meeting of them the fittest organ for suggesting appointments to the Conference, while they would be beyond the reach of influences which might sometimes operate in deterring representatives, as now chosen, from doing their duty. We would still have the districts to elect their representatives, as they do at present, in order that such representatives might become the medium of communication between both the ministers and circuits, within their bounds, and the general superintendents to whom their oversight might belong. It would

meet our views, if, after the election of a representative by a district, he would appoint a certain period for receiving written communications, and a time and place for seeing such of his brethren in the ministry and stewardship as might desire personally to converse with him, on the subject of their next year's appointments; and if thereafter he were to reduce to writing the wishes of his district, with his own views and recommendations, and would then forward that written document to the general superintendent for his guidance. And it would be, we think, for the benefit and security of all, if, after these steps were taken, it should be deemed a breach of propriety for any one to make a personal application to the general superintendents.

IV.

We would make arrangements for bringing the legislation of the Conference and the management of Connexional affairs more fully before the whole of our ministers and lay officers, so as to enlist their minds and sympathies in every movement of the body.

In carrying out this important object, systematically and efficiently, we would secure, in the first place, as far as possible, an equalised attendance of ministers, not members of "the hundred," at the Conference. According to the present plan, some of the brethren manage to ensure their return to Conference year after year, in almost uninterrupted succession, while others seldom get there at all. This, we know, has been the fruitful occasion of discontent. Besides, some circuits have greatly suffered by the withdrawal of their ministers for three or four weeks, as sometimes it has happened, when three or more from the same circuit have had permission to attend the Conference; and, on this and other grounds, it seems desirable somewhat to lessen the annual attendance of ministers there.

Now, in order to place all the ordained ministers of our Church on that platform of parity which, in theory, has been assigned to them, and also to regulate the number annually attending the Conference, we suggest that some plan should be adopted to enable every minister, in regular rotation, to attend, if he choose, unless disqualified from doing so by ecclesiastical sentence. One

way in which this might be effected, would be to appoint a small committee at the Conference to divide the brethren not in "the hundred,"—say, into five divisions, in the order of the years in which they stand on the Journal; and to appoint a fifth part of the number enrolled in each of these divisions annually to attend in rotation. And in order to prevent the ministers of one year from being sent together, the committee might take alternately one from the top and another from the foot of each division. By some such means as this, the whole body of ministers would have the option of attending the Conference once in five years; and in every Conference there would be a most fair and impartial representation of the united brotherhood, in every stage of ministerial standing. No doubt, some of those appointed would find it inconvenient to attend in the year which fell to their lot; but their places might then be supplied by the District Committees, of which, for the time being, they were members.

Then, secondly, we would have, instead of the present arrangement of preparatory committees, a yearly Convocation of ministers and laymen, to be held prior to each Conference, to whom the Con-

nexional committees should submit their annual proceedings, and the members of which should possess the powers now enjoyed by the preparatory committees.

This Convocation should consist of the members of "the legal hundred," the other ministers appointed to attend the Conference, together with such members of circuit vestries, in equal proportions with the latter, as might be elected for this purpose by the District Committees, in proportion to the ministerial staff employed within their bounds. The President of the previous Conference would, of course, preside in such Convocation as its moderator, and the Secretary and Sub-Secretaries of the Conference would be its clerks.

We conceive that such a body, as the Convocation so constituted would form, might serve to awaken a deeper interest and more uniform support to the great schemes of our Church, throughout the entire whole of it; and tend to remove, in no small measure, that jealousy which some have so strenuously endeavoured to promote between the ministry and laity of our Connexion. It seems to us, that some such arrangement would supersede the necessity of con-

vening, as occasionally it has been found indispensable to do, meetings of laymen and ministers, on the principle of presidential selection,—a practice which must always prove invidious, and may possibly, if continued, at some future time be fraught with peril. Besides, such a meeting would afford a safe and authorised opportunity for frequent mutual consultation, and render more compact and efficient our whole ecclesiastical structure ; while, at the same time, a more wholesome provision would be made than that which now exists, for bringing the business-talent and experience of the laity to bear on all the temporal and financial matters of our Church.

Occasion might be taken of such a gathering, by the President of the Conference, to deliver an opening address, in which might be given a review of the year's events as these may have had a bearing on the interests of Christ's cause ; and also such instructions and admonitions as the state of our Connexion, or passing circumstances, might suggest and require.

We would have the business of the Convocation to be conducted in accordance with what might be deemed the most appropriate order. And we

would subject all its members to such fixed rules of procedure as obtain in the ecclesiastical assemblies of sister Churches.

Then, thirdly, in order to adapt the proceedings of the Conference to the altered state of procedure contemplated, we propose that, before it meets in terms of the Deed-poll to perform its legal functions, there should be held sessions of ministerial consultation, to be conducted by "the hundred" and the other ministers sent as already suggested. That the business of these sessions should be to proceed with the solemn duties appropriately and authoritatively belonging to its members as ministers of Christ, according to the course of practice which has hitherto been customary among us, and which includes such objects as these, —the admission of candidates into the ministry; the examination of the moral and ministerial character of the preachers on trial, and the ministers of the body; the trial of the erring and heretical; the appointment of preachers and ministers to their respective spheres of labour; and the enactment of such disciplinary rules and regulations as the Connexion may require. But all the decisions thus unitedly come to, in these ses-

sions of consultation, we would put in the form of recommendations to the Conference.* After these sessions are brought to a close, the legal Conference should then meet, and be formally constituted in the presence of the brethren who have assisted in the previous consultations and conclusions, and proceed by itself, before them, to the work appointed to be done by it in Mr. Wesley's Deed-poll. By this course, the legal difficulties and risks which are incurred by the present mode of holding the Conference would be avoided, and a proper and becoming facility would be afforded for it to maintain its place, and, if needed, to step in, as the legal guardian of the great Methodist trusts, to prevent any infraction of these, should that ever be attempted in the recommendations forwarded to it, either by the proposed Convocation, or the preparatory sessions of ministerial consultation. Many advantages, in point of form and accuracy, we conceive, would thus be secured. Besides, in the event of the Connexion becoming so extensive as to demand, for the sake of convenience, the division of the kingdom into portions, under more than one

* Note L.

supreme court, such might be effected, and yet the unity of the whole secured by the legal Conference meeting, by itself, under the wise provisions of the "Deed-poll."

It occurs to us here, to call attention to the fact, that on account of the increase in the number of ministers, the election into "the hundred," by seniority, now falls upon men who have been in the ministry at least forty years, and whose course is, therefore, usually near its termination. Three-fourths of "the hundred" are thus almost too old efficiently to discharge their duties. We venerate age, and would have its counsels ever to predominate; but might it not be worth consideration, whether prudence does not require such an alteration in the present mode of election, as might serve to bring the Conference, so far as the age of its members is concerned, into a condition more similar to that in which it was when our Founder made the first selection?

Then, fourthly, in order to avoid rash legislation, and to obtain the advantage of united counsel, we submit that it would be well, when any new law is proposed in the Conference, that it should be sent down to the districts, to be con-

sidered by the members of the same, and returned to the following Conference for its further and final determination, with such alterations and emendations as may have been carried in the District Committees.

And, lastly, we think that it should be competent to circuit vestries to forward to the Conference any memorials, proposing the repeal or alteration of our existing laws, or the enactment of any additional rules, provided such memorials were also passed in a session of the District Committees to which the circuits belong, when the circuit commissioners were present along with the ministers. Any member of the district committee should also be at liberty to transmit overtures to the Conference on any subject, to which he can obtain the consent of a majority of his district.

V.

We would suggest the propriety of adding to our existing committees a small committee of general finance, whose business it should be, not to supersede the action of those other committees, but only to devise the best means of raising the

funds duly authorised to be collected for the various schemes in Methodism, with the exception of that for Missions; to receive and disburse the moneys thus collected; and to publish the accounts of the receipts of such funds in a systematic and periodic form, and more in detail than has hitherto been done. To this committee we would have appointed a paid treasurer and secretary, with the institution of such guards as might be needful to secure the faithful discharge of their duties.

By a contrivance similar to this, the Connexion would be enabled to relieve of much routine toil some of the best of its ministers, who hold the treasurerships of its funds in union with pastoral or other duties, besides providing against some of the inconveniences attendant upon the change of residence entailed on these officers by our itinerancy.

We have no sympathy with the unscriptural outcry which some have ignorantly raised against what they are pleased to call "the secularities" of the ministry in Methodism; and we do not make the above proposal with the view of meeting any such error. We make it simply for the purpose of relieving over-burdened men, and of

setting them free to discharge the duties of their respective positions in circuits or in other departments of service, and which are of themselves, respectively, more than sufficiently onerous for them to discharge. We suppose that it would be found impracticable to secure the ends which would be aimed at by the appointment contemplated, without having one or both of its paid agents ministers of the body.

VI.

We would submit whether it would not be judicious, in particular cases, to allow of some relaxation in the system of itinerancy.

In consequence of the increased facilities for travelling which are now everywhere at command, a rapid change is taking place in the condition of our town and city populations. Those who are in circumstances to afford it, are leaving the crowded streets in which hitherto they have dwelt, and are seeking, by a residence in suburban or other localities, to combine a town and country life. New neighbourhoods of a peculiar character are thus constantly being created.

These alterations have already affected many of our town societies. Some who have been their main supports, in a pecuniary point of view, have already followed the fashion of the times, and many more, in all probability, will soon imitate their example. Going to reside in such neighbourhoods, and having no longer the kind of religious services to which they had been accustomed, within accessible distances, the junior members, if not the heads of the families themselves, are getting gradually habituated to other modes of worship, and may become, in time, entirely alienated from our communion. Generally speaking, existing circuits have quite enough to do in maintaining their present establishments, without engaging in such an extension as the altered and altering condition of society demands. The new populations to which we refer, are never likely to be pervaded by Methodism in the way by which it has hitherto been extended amongst our town masses and village peasantry. If they are to be overtaken at all, it must be by the planting of suitable places of worship, and the residence of a permanent and qualified ministry amongst them.

Now, it may be worthy of the most serious and speedy attention of our Connexion, whether, while some of the localities we have in view may yet be secured, it be not advisable to erect churches in them, as chapels of ease to existing circuits, on trusts securing the appointment of the ministry to the Conference, but allowing of a longer residence than that now authorised by "the Deed-poll." The fact that ordained clergymen of the Church of England may be appointed, even to circuits, by the Conference for a longer term than three years, plainly indicates that the adoption of such a plan as we have ventured to indicate, would be no violation of any established principle. From the course of study now pursued by our ministry, and the solemnities of ordination which obtain amongst us, we have secured to ourselves all the advantages attendant upon ordination in the Church of England.

But, besides the populations of which we have spoken, there are, in many towns, dense masses outlying in a state of absolute heathendom, and who, as it appears to us, can never be reached effectually but by some such Methodistic agency, adapted to their circumstances, as that suggested

by a correspondent in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*,* and to which, without further remark, we refer our readers.

And, now that we have come to the end of our self-imposed task, it may be right to say, that we are fully aware of several grave objections which may be taken to different portions of these proposals. We believe, however, on the whole, that they may be made to work in complete harmony with the main body of the laws and usages which the wisdom of our fathers and brethren have established among us, and which have stood the test of so many years of experience. Should the views to which we have ventured to give utterance ever come to be adopted, there will be required a careful codification of our existing laws, and the framing of an extensive, but not, as it seems to us, very difficult range of fresh regulations. Many of these have already been indicated in the course of these suggestions, and others will occur as experience is acquired in their working out.

It may be permitted to us also to say, that, in a Connexion like ours, we should never dream of

* See Fourth Series, vol. v., pp. 72—81.

the simultaneous and compulsory introduction of the arrangements suggested. This must be a work of time and careful preparation. All that we now ask, or wish, is a thoughtful and prayerful consideration of the points adverted to. It will afford us abundant satisfaction if their study, by our fathers and brethren, should prevent any immediate alteration in existing modes of procedure, wholly inadequate to prevent the evils which have afflicted us, and which may only tend to make the practical working of our system more difficult than it now is, in times of agitation. And, above all, it would bring greatest delight to us, if our thinkings should lead others to devise a better and a simpler arrangement than any we can suggest in order to provide for the future well-working of Methodism, and to secure for us a position more favourable than that which we now occupy, successfully to rebut the slanders and the opposition of those that are not of us, and of the future schismatics who may rise up again in our ranks to trouble us.

We have already intimated the very subordinate position which we believe the outworks of a Church's discipline hold in the economics of

Christianity. While, however, we would not have these uncared for, another and different matter must have our chiefest concern. It can never be too often or too strongly urged upon all, that if we would avert evil, in time to come, from the Methodism we love so ardently, we must, each in his place, ministers and people, attend, with increasing prayer and assiduity, to the state of heart-religion among us. If Methodism ever loses its great characteristics of the experimental and the spiritual, its outward machinery, however perfected, will avail nothing. Put into "the balances of the sanctuary," it will be found "wanting;" and, like other corrupt and fallen Churches, it will speedily pass away, or linger on, a degraded thing, to serve for purposes of warning to the Churches of succeeding times. With efforts corresponding to our prayers, let our united cry, as a people, ever be, "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." *

* Habakkuk iii. 2.

NOTES.

NOTE A.—*page 11.*

THE terms Methodist and Methodism were given by the world very much in the way in which the disciples of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch. They were terms of reproach. As the followers and servants of that lowly Saviour, who, though reviled, reviled not again, it was not, perhaps, an improper thing, and not opposed to apostolic precedent, for the founders of our community to take to themselves the designations given in scorn by a scoffing world. But it does to some, who it may be are, after all, over-scrupulous, appear to be somewhat in opposition to the letter, if not the spirit, of that word, which says, "call no man your father," to bear the name of an individual. Our own objection, however, to the prefix "Wesleyan," rests not on this ground, but on another. Methodism is the name by which is now universally known that great revival of religion which took place in this land above a century ago. The Rev. John Wesley we hold to have been the principal agent, in the Spirit's hands, of accomplishing this great work. In adhering to the Institute which he founded, we do so in the belief that we have got hold of that system by which "Christianity in earnest," as Methodism has been most appositely called, may best be maintained and advanced. And we prefer the generic to the more limited term, that we may not yield the ground we exclusively claim to occupy to any other person or community. It seems to us that we give up the position in which God, in His all-wise ordering

of events, placed our Founder, by taking to ourselves his name ; for by doing so we appear to admit that there may be another Methodism than his. To this admission, however, we cannot be a consenting party, both on account of the deep veneration we have for our Founder, and because of our still deeper regard for the appointment given to him by God. The course pursued by the last writer, of any note, on Methodism, Mr. Isaac Taylor, may serve to illustrate our point. While he says of Whitefield, that "he must be allowed to occupy the luminous centre upon the field of Methodism," he yet very strangely, and as if to refute his own theory, calls his book "Wesley, and Methodism." The title of his book we think correct, and the sentiment we have quoted wrong. We would ever place and keep our Founder, in regard to Methodism, where Mr. Taylor evidently put him, in his first and truest thoughts. But, moreover, it is our opinion, strange as it may seem and sound, in a day of great latitudinarianism, that if it be our Sovereign Lord's purpose and determination ever to have on earth but one fold, the form that it will take will substantially be that of our Methodism ; and we would not willingly present an obstacle, even so trifling and unimportant as, in one aspect, a name really is, to allow that to stand in the way, as perhaps, one day, it may, of the accomplishment of this great achievement.

NOTE B.—*page 15.*

Amongst the most recent testimonies to the true position of Methodism, from writers not belonging to our community, are some which are to be met with in Mr. Isaac Taylor's "Wesley, and Methodism ;" a work which might best and chiefly be answered, so far as the attacks which it contains upon us are concerned, by quoting him against himself, as in the former note. From this work we subjoin two

passages, in the sentiments of which we, in general, most heartily concur.

Referring to his view of Methodism as "a genuine development of the principal elements of Christianity," Mr. Taylor goes on to say, that "we cannot allow" this, "without admitting it to take a prominent place in that providential system which embraces all time, and which, from age to age, has, with increasing clearness, been unfolding itself, and becoming cognisable by the human mind. So far as Methodism truly held forth Christianity, it was a signal holding of it forth; for a more marked utterance of the Gospel has occurred only once before in the lapse of eighteen centuries; and that, at the REFORMATION, was not less disparaged than this is by a large admixture of the errors and inconsistencies of its movers or adherents.

"Christianity, given to the world at once in the ministry and writings of the Apostles, has, from the first moment to this, held its onward course under a system of administration inscrutable, indeed, as a whole, or as to its reasons, and yet not entirely occult. On the contrary, at moments, Heaven's economy has seemed to receive a bright beam, as through a dense cloud, making conspicuous, if not the *motives* of the Divine government, yet the fact. The Reformation is held by Protestants to have been such a manifestation of the providence of God in restoring the Gospel, and in proclaiming it anew among the nations; and thus the events of the sixteenth century brought out to view that which is always *real*, whether visible or not—namely, a Divine interposition—maintaining truth in the world, and giving it a fresh expansion from time to time. In perfect analogy with the events of the Reformation were those which attended the rise and progress of Methodism.

"What may be the relative value or importance of these two courses of events is not a question we are now concerned with; and it may be easily allowed that the former surpassed the latter in importance; but that the one, as

well as the other, was a marked development of the scheme which is moving forward toward the subjugation of the human family to the Gospel, is here confidently maintained."—Pp. 10, 11.

Again, Mr. Taylor says, respecting the "Methodistic Company:"—"The names that would claim a place in a history of Methodism, on the ground of personal connection with its founders, and of important services rendered to this evangelic movement, may be as many as a hundred;—a company large enough, assuredly, to attract an eye that is looking over the wide field of Christian history;—and why should it not attract as much regard as we are used to pay to any other band of men whose names are conserved with affection and respect?

"It would not be easy, or not possible, to name any company of Christian preachers, from the apostolic age downward to our own times, whose proclamation of the Gospel has been in a larger proportion of instances effective, or which has been carried over so large a surface, with so much power, or with so uniform a result. No such harvest of souls is recorded to have been gathered by any body of contemporary men, since the first century. An attempt to compute the converts to Methodistic Christianity would be a fruitless, as well as presumptuous undertaking, from which we draw back; but we must not call in question, what is so variously and fully attested, that an unimpeachable Christian profession was the fruit of the Methodistic preaching, in instances that must be computed by hundreds of thousands, throughout Great Britain, and in America.

"Until the contrary can be clearly proved, it may be affirmed that no company of men, of whose labours and doctrine we have any sufficient notice, has gone forth with a creed more distinctly orthodox, or more exempt from admixture of the doctrinal feculence of an earlier time. None have stood forward more free than these were from petty solitudes concerning matters of observance, to which,

whether they were to be upheld or to be denounced, an exaggerated importance was attributed. None have confined themselves more closely to those principal subjects which bear directly upon the relationship of man to God—as immortal, accountable, guilty, and redeemed. If we are tempted to complain of the unvaried complexion of the Methodistic teaching, it is the uniformity which results from a close adherence to the very rudiments of the Gospel. Uniformity or sameness of aspect, as it may be the colouring of dulness and of death, so may it spring from simplicity and power; but can it be a question to which of these sources we should attribute that undiversified breadth which is the characteristic of Methodism?

“To dispute the claims of the Methodistic company to be thus regarded, on the ground of any errors of an incidental kind that may have attended their teaching, or of the follies or delinquencies that may be chargeable upon any of them individually, would be a frivolous, as well as an ungenerous mode of proceeding. Need it be said that these Methodists were men ‘of like passions with ourselves?’ and such, too, were those who, in the apostolic age, carried the Gospel throughout the Roman world and beyond it. Taken in the mass, the one company of men was as wise as the other—not wiser—as holy, not more holy. If it be affirmed that the Christian worthies of some remote time were, as a class of men, of a loftier stature in virtue and piety than these with whom we have now to do, let the evidence on which such an assumption could be made to rest be brought forward: this can never be done; and the supposition itself should be rejected as a puerile supposition.

“Yet there is one plea, on the ground of which, if it be valid, the Methodistic company might be cast down from the place of honour which is now claimed for it. This ground of exception is that occupied by those who, with strictness and consistency, hold the doctrine that, apart from the line of episcopal ordination, unbroken in its descent,

there is and can be no Church, no ministry, no sacraments, no salvation. It is much to be desired that those who profess thus to think would take up the case of Methodism, and deal with it thoroughly, flinching from no consequence towards which their theory may lead them. The instance is every way well adapted to such a purpose; nor does it offer any colour of evasion, nor admit of any way of escape from the one conclusion which the premises demand, if those premises be valid. The conditions of this very definite case preclude an evasive reply, such as this,—‘We cannot tell whether Methodism was from Heaven or of men.’ Neither Wesley’s episcopal ordination, nor Whitefield’s, could, on the ground of the ‘historic succession,’ carry with it a power of ordination; and certainly it could not excuse or palliate their insubordination, as presbyters of the established Church. It is not as if Methodism had sprung up in some remote quarter of Christendom, where it could not have connected itself with the apostolic line, or where ignorance, on questions of this sort, was involuntary. Nor is it as if Methodism had been a revival, taking place within a body which claimed for its ministry a high ecclesiastical ancestry, so that its original irregularity was shrouded by the mists of centuries. Methodism took its rise in the very bosom of the apostolic succession; and it was carried forward by men who were fully informed as to all subjects bearing upon the course which they pursued. The offence—if an offence—was committed in broad day, by men with their eyes open; and these men had cut themselves off from the benefit of pleading an abstract conscientious opinion, analogous to that of the Presbyterians or Independents; they declared themselves Churchmen and Episcopalians.

“On every side, therefore, this Methodistic problem is clearly defined, and the more we think of it, the more exempt will it seem from ambiguities, or ways of escape. No one who is accustomed to pursue principles with logical severity into their consequences, will deny that the apostolic-

succession theory, such as it has been enunciated and defined of late, must either break itself upon Methodism, or must consign Methodism and its millions of souls to perdition, in as peremptory a manner as that in which the Church of Rome fixes its anathema upon heretical nations.

“No doubt there are more than a few sincere, seriously-minded, and kind-tempered persons, holding this theory, who would find themselves wanting in the nerve and hardihood required of them on an occasion like this, when challenged, by the clearest rule of consistency, to take their places, as spectators, while men, such as Wesley, Whitefield, Fletcher, with millions of their proselytes and spiritual progeny, are to be sent down alive into the pit! The one precise ground of this *auto de fé* should not be lost sight of. Let it be stated;—the Methodistic preachers, even if they held some questionable subsidiary notions, yet professed, in the most decisive terms, their adherence to the doctrine of the Three Creeds: therefore, they were not heretics. They declared their approval of the Thirty-nine Articles; they threw themselves upon the Book of Homilies; they frequented the liturgical worship of the Church; they partook of its sacraments; they acknowledged its orders.

“It can never be thought a Christian-like act to consign masses of men to perdition on the mere charge of enthusiasm, or of some extravagance in behaviour. As to the general good conduct of the Methodistic converts, it is not pretended that it was not fully equal to that of other men—reputed Christians. Nevertheless, there remains this one ground of exception against the Methodistic body, which the apostolic-succession theory brings forward, and which it must continue to bring forward and insist upon. Whoever, while he holds this theory, flies off from its application in a case so flagrant and so thoroughly unambiguous as this, implicates himself in the sin of schism, and comes within range of that anathema to which he has not the conscience and the courage to respond.

“But if Methodism be cut off from one line of succession, it may claim another, or more than one other. If there be any difficulty in connecting this body of evangelists with those in other ages, who, in a like spirit, have borne testimony to the truth, that difficulty attaches much rather to the obscurity of the extant evidence on the ground of which the claim of the more ancient witnesses is to be established, than to any ambiguity as to the latter. To trace the true apostolic line, from Methodism upwards, would lead us over ground not merely too extensive, but which might be passed over to more advantage apart from our immediate purpose. Already we have claimed for Wesley, Whitefield, and others, a genuine relationship to the Protestant martyrs and founders of the English Church, between whom and themselves no important difference of doctrine or of feeling can be made out. The question is not whether the English reformers would have formally sanctioned the Methodist secession, for to this question no answer can be obtained, even by inference; but it is affirmed that these Methodists rather than any other churchmen of their times, may make good their pretensions to have been, in doctrine and in spirit, the genuine sons of the English Reformed Church.

“But the Methodists took orders in another manner, less direct and explicit, indeed, but yet—so bold are we—not unauthentic or unimportant. Methodism, in a deep and genuine sense, held on to Nonconformity, and to whatever had been good in Puritanism.

“Wesley, Whitefield, Fletcher, and their colleagues, if placed by the side of Howe, Baxter, Charnock, Manton, Bates, Flavel, and others, must be thought to rank below them, in theological attainment, in compass of learning, in intellectuality, and in discursive power, as preachers and writers; as well as in the depth and elevation of their devotional style. In blamelessness of life, in devotedness, and on the ground of doctrinal integrity, the balance stands even between the two companies. But then, even after allowance

has been made for the obstructions that stood in the way of the Nonconformists, the Methodists had much the advantage on the ground of expansive and adventurous Christian philanthropy: on *this* ground, in fact, the founders of Methodism have no rivals. Yet, beside their warmer zeal, as evangelists, the relation in which they stood to the ecclesiastical authorities of their time gave them a signal advantage: to this an allusion has already been made. The energies and the *animus* of the Nonconformists, as also of the Puritans, had, to a great extent, been employed and exhausted in resisting, and in protesting against, the despotic measures of the Court and Church of their times; hence it was that they were always too much occupied with matters which were either altogether frivolous, or of very inferior moment. But a protesting and a resistant function of this sort does not favourably develop the symmetry of the Christian character, much less does it auspiciously affect the course of the evangelist; for even if his temper has not become soured in controversy, his zeal for the conversion of souls will scarcely hold itself clear of impatience to make proselytes to his party. Resistance to Church despotism may be the duty of Christian men, at some seasons; but such seasons will not be the times that are made glad by the triumphs of the Gospel.

“The Methodists stood in a far better position than this as evangelists. Reviled, pelted, and hooted by mobs, as they were, sometimes mistreated by magistrates, and generally unwisely and unkindly dealt with by the Church authorities, they themselves had no quarrel, either with Church or State; in all points they were loyal men: they cherished also a filial regard toward the Church; and they themselves were of it. As to the civil power, they knew and found that its feeling and arm were always on their side. In their bosoms there was no rankling grudge against authorities—there was no particle of that venom which, wherever it lodges, infects and paralyses the religious affections. Their sole quarrel was with sin and Satan; it was not with the visible powers of this world. Men may

wage war with the Devil without hatred ; but not with their fellow men. Whitefield's face, while denouncing all the powers of darkness, still wore its usual loving smoothness ;—not so the Puritan, when Prelacy was in his eye.

“ We may well recognise that providential ordering of the Methodist revival, which kept it clear of all sympathy with the bitter ‘vestments and gesture’ feeling of the preceding century ; and if required to name that one adjunctive circumstance which most favoured its progress, as a proclamation of the Gospel, we should not hesitate to say—the Church training, and the Church feeling of the Wesleys, and of Whitefield.

“ The Puritan temper had nearly ceased to attach to the Nonconformists of the times of Watts and Doddridge ; and they and their predecessors had done their part well in preserving evangelic doctrine from the extinction which then threatened it. It was a witness-function which they had discharged, and which had more of a passive than of an active character ; invasive it was not in any degree ; yet the true-hearted among the Nonconformists affectionately greeted their more enterprising successors, and cordially bid them God's speed. When Whitefield sat at the bedside of Watts, and in his frequent intercourse with Doddridge, and when he and the Wesleys, as often happened, were welcomed in the homes of the dissenters—that is to say, such dissenters as Williams of Kidderminster—they may be thought of as then tacitly receiving a charge, and as being invested with a commission to do effectively what these good men had not been in a position to attempt. Yet it was with a lively satisfaction that they hailed the dawn of a brighter day ! They gave the rising Methodism their blessing, and died, rejoicing in hope. Thus did this new ministration of apostolic Christianity receive a double authentication ; first and formally, from the Episcopal Church, and then, virtually, from the Nonconforming Church. It was in a manner not altogether unlike this that the Reformers—German, Swiss,

and English—united in themselves, officially and personally, the double continuity of a formal, and of an occult ordination. Visibly, they were ministers of the Church from which they separated, and which cast them out: at the same time, by personal intercourse and correspondence, by congruity in doctrine, by sympathy as martyrs, or as sufferers for the same Gospel, they stood related to the Bohemian and Waldensian bodies, and were honoured by the opprobrium that attached to the names—Wickliffeites and Lollards.

“That law of continuity which is seen to prevail in the history of Christianity, has hitherto always shown itself under this two-fold aspect. That is to say, revivals and renovations, whenever they occur, so arise as to render homage, first, to the visible or hierarchical transmission of Christian ordinances and ministrations; and at the same time they do not fail to connect themselves with that which has come down from an earlier season of reform and refreshment. Although an ample comment upon this biform law of religious history might seem, in some of its instances, to be too elaborate, or in a degree precarious, yet, when the course of events through long periods is broadly regarded, it presents itself too frequently not to attract notice, and to establish itself silently in our convictions.

“Those whose own religious temperament is tranquil and devout, and who had always rather love than hate, will, while reviewing any separate portion of Christian history, or when contemplating the whole of it, draw much comfort from the considerations which this general principle suggests; for these considerations avail, not merely to discharge ecclesiastical virulence, if it has had any lodgment in our minds, but to abate that antagonistic vehemence to which we so easily give place, in matters of religion; and in a word, it will aid us in the endeavour to look calmly upon the troubled arena of this present scene, as from a higher level.

“Further from our immediate purpose we must not travel than may be needful thus to bring the METHODISTIC COM-

PANY into what, we think, is its rightful position on the field of religious history. How comforting it is, and how consoling, and how does it purify, ennoble, animate, and elevate our own feelings, when we consent to think and speak of these good men as taking their place in the host which 'no man can number' of those who are constituting and shall constitute a social economy, unearthly, and never to be dissolved!

"We cast from us, therefore, with pity (and with shame, if ever it have found a lodgment in our own heart) that hierarchical arrogance which would impel us to look upon the Methodistic band with scorn, and which mutters its anathemas against schismatics. On the other side, we put as far from us the dissident's glorying in the same company, when he points to them as the successful leaders of a great and permanent revolt from the Episcopal Church. In the place of either of these contracted feelings, we recognise, upon the front of Methodism, that special characteristic which has attached to Heaven's own servants, from age to age, as the authentic representatives, first, of an existing and visible order of things, and then of that always extant, remonstrant energy which took its rise in some anterior season of renovation. Let us be shown anywhere a company of men whose office it has been to re-animate what has become lifeless, and to purify what is corrupt, who have not stood related, in this two-fold manner, to the present and to the past."—Pp. 130—139.

NOTE C.—*page 18.*

"There is," says a writer, "a pretended philanthropy, whose sympathies are wholly expended upon the vile, and never upon the virtuous; upon the villain, more than upon his victims. Its heart is tenderer towards crime under retribution, than towards innocence under outrage. It is far more solicitous to screen a scoundrel from his just

deserts, than the innocent from his machinations, or society from destruction. It is far more horrified at the punishment he suffers, than at the sin which brought it on his head. It bends its efforts not to reform the evil doer, but to avert the consequences of his evil deed; striving less to turn him from the way of transgressors, than to make the way of transgressors less hard and thorny; and seeking not so much to remove sin, as to destroy the sting of sin. It cares little for men's righteousness, but everything for their comfort. Its words are all honey and oil for the criminal, but vinegar and oil of vitriol for righteous law and righteous men. For the most part, it has no occasion to recognise any rule of holiness, nor any revelation from heaven; but is considerably wiser and more enlightened than the men who were moved by the Holy Ghost Himself."

NOTE D.—page 20.

There is no preacher admitted to the Methodist ministry but might find continued comfort and success in his work, if he would only use, faithfully and diligently, the endowments with which he has been entrusted. The appropriate trials, respecting "grace, gifts, and fruit," through which every candidate for this ministry must pass, before he enters into it, afford the guarantee of possessed adaptation, which, if duly improved, will place him where his Lord and Master would have him be. The way to rise in Methodism, as in every other vocation in life, is for a man, in the sphere he at any time occupies, to discharge, then and there, present duty. Complaining will not better his circumstances; disregarding God's own arrangements in providence will not do it; indulging in unfounded suspicions of the integrity of his fathers and brethren will not do it; envying the eminence which another has reached will not do it; detraction will not do it; but a cheerful, pains-taking, prayerful filling-up and completion of given

work will do it. Many a minister of comparatively small ability and attainment has secured a place in the affections of the people, and been held in much repute by his brethren, while others, much more favoured in mere intellectuality, have failed to do either the one or the other. The cultivation of what is included in the term "heart," is alone wanted to cause some to take their proper place in our Churches, who have hitherto looked upon themselves as slighted or forgotten. The Methodist people love affectionate fidelity, and that minister is sure to be in request among us, who wins their hearts by doing, with God's blessing, good to men's souls.

NOTE E.—*page 30.*

The treatment which Methodism has received at the hands of Dissenters reflects very discredibly upon them as individuals, and upon the Christianity which they profess. If we had been a proselyting body, or had been given to make assaults upon them, remembering what human nature is, it had not been surprising if, yielding to temptation, they had made similar reprisals. Any such reasons, however, can never be given for their bitter, sectarian hostility. We seek noiselessly and unostentatiously to pursue our way in calling men to repentance, to faith in Christ, and to a life of love and holiness. We intermeddle not with the affairs of others. We keep to our own proper business, and have endeavoured to carry out the resolution of the Conference of 1820, which enjoins upon us to "remember" ourselves, "and endeavour to impress on our people, that we, as a body, do not exist for the purposes of party; and that we are especially bound by the example of our Founder, by the original principle on which our Societies are formed, and by our constant professions before the world, to avoid a narrow, bigoted, and sectarian spirit, to abstain from needless and unprofitable disputes on minor subjects of

theological controversy, and, as far as we innocently can, 'to please all men for their good unto edification.' Let us, therefore, maintain towards all denominations of Christians who 'hold the Head,' the kind and catholic spirit of primitive Methodism; and, according to the noble maxim of our Fathers in the Gospel, 'be the friends of all, the enemies of none.' " And yet, though we have thus acted, the parties we most sorrowingly refer to have, for years, allowed no opportunity to pass of making the fiercest attacks upon us of which they were capable. We can very well account, on personal grounds, for the hostility of individuals among their journalists and writers. Some of them, for instance, have been renegades from our own ranks, and, true to a sad development of our nature, they have ever uniformly been our bitterest foes. There is before us one, who, in his happier days, when he was a local preacher, not only professed belief in the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit as a tenet of his faith, but more, he also stated that he was himself in the enjoyment of that unspeakable blessing. But he leaves our community, and forthwith proceeds to denounce this cardinal doctrine in the true experience of religion, both in his preaching and in his writings. Can the subsequent shameless antagonism of such a man form matter of surprise to any? Or, take another specimen of the class we refer to,—a young man, while actually passing through the solemn engagements of his ordination service, contributes to a hostile provincial journal, articles against the very ministry to which he was seeking admission, and in which he was engaging to serve his Saviour. But who wonders that the man capable of an act like that, should throw up his place among us, within a few weeks after entering into most solemn compact with the body, sealed as it was at the Lord's table, over the memorials of a Saviour's dying love, and that he should become, in the hands of an unfriendly reviewer, a tool knowingly to caricature the ministry and the denomination which he had so recently left? The deep-

seated, quenchless hostility of men like these were not surprising. But what of the antagonism of others?—of the masses in these sects of Baptists and Congregationalists which makes it an acceptable, and apparently a very palatable thing to them, that their periodic publications should continue to be the vehicles of abuse and misrepresentation? How may this be accounted for? Is the source of it to be found in a consciousness that their hold on the public mind of the country is on the wane, while ours is on the increase? Or has it been occasioned by the small and partial successes which have attended their labours, as compared with those so largely vouchsafed to a “poor,” “illiterate,” “vulgar,” “low,” “enthusiastic,” “fanatical” Methodism, as it has been called? When one comes to think of the present position of dissent, in the lights thrown out by such a contrast, especially when we further consider the superior advantages which their antecedents have given them, in the two thousand ministers of non-conformity—the distinguished learning and ability which have long been found in their ranks—their prior occupation of the country, and their existence in it for between two and three centuries—it does seem marvellously strange that the Methodists, in a hundred years, should have outstripped them. Indeed, did they not profess religion, their deep mortification, with their accompanying efforts to injure us, might really be excused, and an apology framed for them, which, at any rate, would be appreciated by all who, having causelessly injured others, hate their victims with an implacability that the really injured ones can never return. But we confess ourselves to be very reluctant to attribute to any professing followers of Christ, the meanness of motive which such grounds as those above pointed out would but too plainly indicate. We prefer to leave the matter as it stands, without searching further for its occasion, or seeking to penetrate into the region of motives, lest we intrude into the province which belongeth alone to “the Searcher

of hearts," and so become chargeable with sin and presumption. It is right, however, not to close our eyes to the true facts of the case, and we advisedly put them on record. The secularised pluralist, who holds the metropolitan pulpits of Whitefield, a man professing in principle to be an *independent*, intrudes himself, unbidden by any one, or any cause but his own bitter hate, into our affairs—the affairs, let it ever be kept in mind, of another Church, established on principles essentially and fundamentally different from those professed by the Churches of his own order. This man endorses the whole of the misrepresentations and calumnies of a hostile faction; and that after having been put upon his guard by the following advertisement, inserted in his own newspaper of September 9, 1849 :—

"PROCEEDINGS OF THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE.—We the undersigned Wesleyan Ministers, having attended the sitting of the late Conference in Manchester, and having had our attention directed to certain Reports of its Proceedings which have appeared in the *Wesleyan Times* newspaper, consider it right thus publicly to deny their general accuracy; and to caution our friends, whether of our own or of other Christian denominations, against coming to conclusions on the points to which such Reports relate, solely, or even mainly, on the ground of anything they contain; since, by their omission of several important matters, their incorrect statements regarding others, and the colouring introduced into their narratives of fact, they are calculated grossly to mislead those who depend upon them for information :—John Hannah, D.D., Robert Newton, D.D., Jabez Bunting, D.D., John Scott, Samuel Jackson, John Beecham, D.D., John Mason, John Rattenbury, John Farrar, W. L. Thornton, A.M., Peter Duncan, Thomas Vasey, John Stephenson, Robert Sherwell, John W. Button, B. Andrews, LL.D., John Smith (Devonport), Henry Young, Robert Young, John Hall, John Rigg, Isaac Keeling, Corbett Cooke, Peter C. Horton, Joseph

Mood, W. W. Stamp, W. Naylor, W. Vevers, G. Osborn, F. J. Jobson, G. B. Macdonald, F. A. West, W. Barton, J. P. Haswell, W. Bird, J. Loutit, W. H. Rule, Charles Prest, Henry Bleby, Thomas Stead, Samuel Hardey, George Jackson, Henry Davies, Edward Sumner, W. Horton."

Without, however, halting in his career, he has continued, down to the present time, to hound on the Everett schism with all the coarse vulgarity and undisguised malice of which he possesses such abundant stores. But, were this all, we had not condescended either to notice the man or his proceedings. But he holds an official position in the sect to which he belongs. He is the editor of denominational periodicals, which, twice a year, come under the review of his brethren in their Union gatherings. Now, it may not be generally known, that long before the Everett schismatics resorted to the tactics they have pursued,—and especially to the practice so thoroughly Popish, in many of its aspects, of "stopping supplies," in order to force compliance with their doctrines,—that those very courses were recommended to them in one of the papers of the *Christian Witness*. In its pages, the editor had the audacity to furnish them with the following counsel:—"There must be *no clamour*, NO VIOLENCE, NO SECESSION. The first were folly; the second, crime; the third, madness! Your cause is strong as the everlasting hills. Weaken it not by indiscretion! Let every circuit organise itself; and let a regular communication be established throughout the whole. Let your purpose be immutable—your will inflexible; and the contest, calm, peaceful, prayerful! First prove the full power of truth and reason,—weapons which, alone, wisely wielded by an immense majority of your members, will infallibly prove victorious. Let the extreme weapons of defence supplied by financial arrangements by no means be used till *the last extremity*. But if they must then be seized, so let it be! Grasp them,—wield them; and lay them down only at the foot of victory! Then, in one day, and in one hour, let

contributions of all sorts, from all sources, cease and determine till all grievances are fully redressed !” * Seldom, if ever, has any man been enabled, within so limited a compass, to condense the unblushing recommendation of so many violations of plain New Testament precepts, or to counsel the commission of sin with so much hypocritical sanctimoniousness. To speak of *starving* ministers into compliance with the democracy of dissent, peacefully and prayerfully ! What cool effrontery ! How well befitting the lips or pen of a Dominic de Guzman ! How little like the deliverance of a minister of Christ ! Subsequent events have shown how aptly the scholars he sought to teach have taken their master’s advice, and followed his instructions ; barring, of course, the “calm,” the peace, and the prayer. It is certainly no fault of his, if in our ranks there have not been as many ministers wanting bread, as there have been, and may be still, for aught we know, starved-out ministers in the range of Congregationalism. Now, mark what occurred at the first Union meeting held after the insertion of this atrocious paragraph. When the *élite* of the body were present, a resolution was “unanimously adopted,” offering (we use their own words) “to their honoured brother, the editor, its warmest thanks for his labours and services ;” † and, of course, *inter alia*, for his articles on Methodism, from which the above is an extract. By this procedure, the sin and shame of the individual became the sin and shame of the whole denomination, or, at least, of that part of it included in the Union. The dying expression of poor Madame Roland was a very significant one, and often do circumstances such as these occur to call it forth :—“O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name !” These sad developments show us, that in spite of platform professions, we have enemies and persecutors other than those who follow in the wake of “the expelled.” Well

* The passage is printed above as it appeared in the *Witness*, vol. iv. p. 263.

† Ibid. p. 399.

would it be, perhaps, if these facts, while they cause us more earnestly than ever both to pray for those who "despitefully use" us, and to adhere to our peaceful, unsectarian policy, should teach us more entirely to "dwell with our own people," and to busy ourselves in the prosecution of our own proper work. The great men who began Methodism began it not in disputation. They sought, first, to obtain spiritual religion themselves; and then, having found it, they devoted themselves to bring others to seek and find it also. May their children still emulate their example! If we are but careful to preserve the character which they stamped on our Methodism, then shall we be little affected by the contemptible procedure to which we have adverted; and we shall still be enabled to repeat, in fullest assurance of its truth, the sentiment which gladdened the departing spirit of our venerable Founder, "The best of all is, 'God is with us.'"

NOTE F.—*page 34.*

The statements contained in the Minutes of the Conference, the Journals of Mr. Wesley, and his letters, clearly indicate the views which he entertained respecting the office and work of a leader. Without referring to earlier passages bearing on this point, we at once come down to 1771, when Methodism had arrived at that settled state in which it remained to the end of Mr. Wesley's life. In that year we find him visiting a certain Society, in which disorders had occurred, and on that occasion he prepared and read over to the leaders a document, in which he stated the relative position and powers of the several officers in the Connexion. It is given in one of his Journals as follows: viz.—

"I. That it may be more easily discerned whether the members of our Societies are working out their own salva-

tion, they are divided into little companies, called classes. One person in each of these is styled the leader: it is his business—1. To see each person in his class once a week; to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort them:—2. To receive what they are willing to give toward the expenses of the Society:—and, 3. To meet the assistant and the stewards once a week.

“II. This is the whole and sole business of a leader, or any number of leaders. But it is common for the assistant in any place, when several leaders are met together, to ask their advice as to any thing that concerns either the temporal or spiritual welfare of the Society. This he may, or he may not, do, as he sees best. I frequently do it in the larger Societies; and on many occasions I have found, that in a multitude of counsellors there is safety.

“III. From this short view of the original design of leaders, it is easy to answer the following questions:—

“Q. 1. What authority has a single leader?

“He has authority to meet his class, to receive their contributions, and to visit the sick in his class.

“Q. 2. What authority have all the leaders of a Society met together?

“They have authority to show their class-papers to the assistant, to deliver the money they have received to the stewards, and to bring in the names of the sick.

“Q. 3. But have they not authority to restrain the assistant, if they think he acts improperly?

“No more than any member of Society has. After mildly speaking to him, they are to refer the thing to Mr. W.

“Q. 4. Have they not authority to hinder a person from preaching?

“None but the assistant has this authority.

“Q. 5. Have they not authority to displace a particular leader?

“No more than the door-keeper has. To place and to displace leaders belongs to the assistant alone.

"Q. 6. Have they not authority to expel a particular member of Society ?

"No: the assistant only can do this.

"Q. 7. But have they not authority to regulate the temporal and spiritual affairs of the Society ?

"Neither the one nor the other. Temporal affairs belong to the stewards; spiritual to the assistant.

"Q. 8. Have they not authority to make a collection of a public nature ?

"No: the assistant only can do this.

"Q. 9. Have they authority to receive the yearly collection ?

"No: this also belongs to the assistant.

"IV. Considering these things, can we wonder at the confusion which has been here for some years ?

"If one wheel of a machine gets out of its place, what disorder must ensue! In the Methodist discipline, the wheels regularly stand thus:—the assistant, the preachers, the stewards, the leaders, the people. But here the leaders, who are the lowest wheel but one, were got quite out of their place. They were got at the top of all, above the stewards, the preachers, yea, and above the assistant himself.

"V. To this chiefly I impute the gradual decay of the work of God in D—.

"Here has been a jar throughout the whole machine. Most of the wheels were hindered in their motion. The stewards, the preachers, the assistant, all moved heavily. They felt all was not right; but if they saw where the fault lay, they had not strength to remedy it.

"But it may be effectually remedied now. Without rehearsing former grievances (which may all die and be forgotten), for the time to come let each wheel keep its own place. Let the assistant, the preachers, the stewards, the leaders, know and execute their several offices. Let none encroach upon another, but all move in harmony and love. So shall the work of God flourish among you, perhaps as it

never did before ; while you all hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“ D—, *March 29th, 1771.*”

Wesley's Journal, No. XVI.

In the Minutes of the Conference of 1786, we have the following general direction : — “ Inform the leaders that every assistant (superintendent) is to change both stewards and leaders where he sees good. And that no leader has power to put any person either into or out of the Society.” — (*Minutes*, i. 192.) And in January, 1790, the year before his death, Mr. Wesley wrote the following characteristic letter to the Rev. John Mason, then superintendent of St. Austle circuit, viz.—

“ My dear Brother,—As long as I live the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We have not, and never had, any such custom. We are no republicans, and never intend to be : it would be better for those who are so minded to go quietly away. I have been uniform, both in doctrine and discipline, for above these fifty years ; and it is a little too late for me to turn into a new path now I am grey-headed. Neither good old brother Pascoe (God bless him !) expects it from me, nor brother Wood, nor brother Flamank. If you and I should be called hence this year, we may bless God that we have not lived in vain. Come, let us have a few more strokes at Satan's kingdom, and then we shall depart in peace. I am, your affectionate friend and brother.”

The only regulations in the Minutes of Conference, in Mr. Wesley's time, which refer to local preachers are as follow, viz. :—

“ Q.—What can be done to prevent unqualified persons from preaching or exhorting ?

“ A.—1. Let none exhort, in any of our Societies, without a note of recommendation from the assistant (superintendent). 2. Let every exhorter see that this be renewed

yearly. 3. Let every assistant rigorously insist upon this.”
—*Minutes*, vol. i., p. 30.

In reference to smuggling, this direction, amongst others, is given to the assistants and helpers:—“Silence every local preacher that defends it.”—*Minutes*, vol. i., p. 73.

NOTE G.—page 34.

Very many quotations from the Minutes of Conference and Mr. Wesley’s writings might be given to substantiate our statements respecting the relationship of “the Societies” to the Church of England. We select the following. In “the Large Minutes” we read—“Q.—But are we not Dissenters? A.—No. Although we call sinners to repentance in all places of God’s dominions; and, although we frequently use extemporary prayer, and unite together in a religious society; yet we are not Dissenters in the only sense which our law acknowledges, namely, those who renounce the service of the Church. We do not, we dare not, separate from it. We are not seceders, nor do we bear any resemblance to them. We set out upon quite opposite principles. The seceders laid the very foundation of their work in judging and condemning others. We laid the foundation of our work in judging and condemning ourselves. They begin, everywhere, with showing their hearers how fallen the Church and ministers are. We begin everywhere with showing our hearers how fallen they are themselves.” In 1813, this important peculiarity of character was stated in the House of Commons, when the new Toleration Law was under discussion; and, to meet our case, the term Dissenter and its correlatives were omitted by the legislature in that enactment. In the Minutes already quoted, he directs his preachers, “1st, to exhort all people to keep close to the Church and sacraments; 2nd, to warn them all against niceness in hearing, a prevailing evil! 3rd, to warn them also against despising the prayers of the Church.” And he

gives this caution against considering the Methodist service as a substitute for that of the Establishment:—"But some may say, 'Our own service is public worship.' Yes, in a *sense*, but not such as supersedes the Church service. We never designed it should. It pre-supposes public prayer, like the sermons at the University. If it were designed to be instead of the Church service, it would be essentially defective. For it seldom has the four grand parts of public prayer, *deprecation*, *petition*, *intercession*, and *thanksgiving*. If the people put ours in the room of the Church service, we hurt them that stay with us, and ruin them that leave us."

With these views Mr. Wesley's own practice corresponded. In his "Journals" we meet with such passages as these:—"1759. Thursday, 25th. I had appointed to preach, at seven in the evening, at Bradford; but when I came, I found Mr. Hart was to preach at six; so I delayed till the Church service was ended, that there might not appear (at least on my part) even the shadow of opposition between us." "1760. Friday, 4th. I took my ease, riding in a chaise to Limerick; where, on Saturday, 5th, ten of us met in a little conference. By the blessing of God, we were all of one mind, particularly with regard to the Church; even J. D. has not now the least thought of leaving it, but attends there, be the minister good or bad." "1767. Monday, 23rd. I rode to Yarmouth, and found the Society, after the example of Mr. W——p, had entirely left the Church. I judged it needful to speak largely upon that head; they stood reprov'd, and resolved, one and all, to go to it again." "1770. Sunday, 17th. We had a poor sermon at Church. However, I went again in the afternoon, remembering the words of Mr. Philip Henry, 'If the preacher does not know his duty, I bless God that I know mine.'"

"1786. July 25th. The Conference began at Bristol; about eighty preachers attended We all determined to continue in the Church, without one dissenting voice; and I doubt not but this determination will stand, at least

till I am removed into a better world." "1687. Jan. 2nd. I went over to Deptford; but it seemed I was got into a den of lions. Most of the leading men of the Society were mad for separating from the Church. . . . At length, after meeting the whole Society, I told them, 'If you are resolved, you may have your service in Church-hours; but, remember, from that time you will see my face no more.' This struck deep, and from that hour I have heard no more of *separating* from the Church." "1789. July 3rd. Our little conference began in Dublin, and ended, Tuesday, 7th. . . . I never saw such a number of preachers before so unanimous in all points, particularly as to leaving the Church, which none of them had the least thought of."

In a letter to a friend, dated London, February 17th, 1787, published in the "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine" for September, 1834, the following passage occurs:—"By all means go to Church as often as you can, and exhort all Methodists so to do. They that are enemies to the Church, are enemies to *me*. I am a friend to it, and ever was. By our reading prayers we prevent our people's contracting an hatred for forms of prayer, which would naturally be the case, if we always prayed extempore."

A paper of Mr. Wesley's (dated December*11th, 1789), published in the "Arminian Magazine" for April, 1790, page 214, entitled, "Further Thoughts on Separation from the Church," thus concludes:—"And this is no way contrary to the profession which I have made above these fifty years. I never had any design of separating from the Church; I have no such design now; I do not believe that the Methodists in general design it, when I am no more seen. Nevertheless, in spite of all that I can do, many of them will separate from it, (although, I am apt to think, not one-half, perhaps not one-third.) These will be so bold and injudicious as to form a separate party, which, consequently, will dwindle away into a dry, dull, separate party. In flat opposition to these, I declare once more that I live and

die a member of the Church of England; and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it."

Of the treatment which our people received from the clergy, and which led to their alienation from the Church of England, we have many such instances as the following given in Mr. Wesley's Journals:—"1748, September 12th, Bandon (in Ireland). It grieved me to hear the poor encouragement given last Sunday to the crowds that flocked to Church, which place some of them had not troubled for years before. We send them to Church to hear ourselves railed at, and, what is far worse, the truth of God. . . . Sept. 13th. I rode on to Kinsale. Here, also, the minister, instead of rejoicing to see so many publicans in the temple, entertained them with a railing accusation against me, as an impostor, an incendiary, and messenger of Satan. Strange justice, that Mr. P. should be voted a friend of the Church, and I an enemy who send hundreds into the Church for him to drive out again."

NOTE H.—page 35.

The principles and facts of Methodist legislation can only be gathered from a careful perusal of the Minutes of Conference, accompanied by a competent acquaintance with the historical circumstances with which the regulations in these Minutes stand connected. This, however, is within the reach of comparatively few. For the benefit of those who may desire accurate data, on which to form their own opinions respecting the reiterated misrepresentations regarding the assumptions of the Conference, we subjoin, without remark, in chronological order, all the important documents bearing on the subject:—

I. EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF CONFERENCE OF 1776,
DETAILING THE ORIGIN OF MR. WESLEY'S POWER.

"Q. But what power is this which you exercise over all the Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland?

"A. Count Z. loved to keep all things closely. I love to do all things openly. I will, therefore, tell you all I know of the matter, taking it from the very beginning.

"1. In November, 1738, two or three persons, who desired to flee from the wrath to come, and then seven or eight more, came to me in London, and desired me to advise and pray with them. I said, 'If you will meet on Thursday night, I will help you as well as I can.' More and more then desired to meet with them, till they were increased to many hundreds. The case was afterwards the same at Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle, and many other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It may be observed, the desire was on *their* part, not *mine*. My desire was, to live and die in retirement. But I did not see that I could refuse them my help, and be guiltless before God.

"Here commenced my power; namely, a power to appoint, when, and where, and how, they should meet; and to remove those whose life showed that they had no desire to 'flee from the wrath to come.' And this power remained the same, whether the people meeting together were twelve, twelve hundred, or twelve thousand.

"2. In a few days, some of them said, 'Sir, we will not sit under you for nothing. We will subscribe quarterly.' I said, 'I will have nothing, for I want nothing. My fellowship supplies me with all, and more than I want.' One replied, 'Nay, but you want £115 to pay for the lease of the Foundery. And likewise a large sum of money will be wanting to put it into repair.' On this consideration, I suffered them to subscribe. And when the Society met, I asked, 'Who will take the trouble of receiving this money, and paying it where it is needful?' One said, 'I will do it, and keep the account for you.' So here was the first steward. Afterwards I desired one or two more to help me as stewards, and, in process of time, a greater number.

"Let it be remarked, it was I myself, not the people, who chose these stewards, and appointed to each the distinct

work, wherein he was to help me, as long as I desired ; and herein I began to exercise another sort of power, namely, that of appointing and removing stewards.

“3. After a time, a young man came, T. Maxfield, and said he desired to help me, as a son in the Gospel. Soon after came a second, Thomas Richards, and a third, Thomas Westal. These severally desired to serve me as sons, and to labour when and where I should direct. Observe, these likewise desired me, not I them. But I durst not refuse their assistance. And here commenced my power, to appoint each of these, when, where, and how to labour ; that is, while he chose to continue with me : for each had a power to go away when he pleased ; as I had also to go away from them, or any of them, if I saw sufficient cause. The case continued the same when the number of preachers increased. I had just the same power still, to appoint when, and where, and how, each should help me ; and to tell any, if I saw cause, ‘I do not desire your help any longer.’ On these terms, and no other, we joined at first ; on these we continue joined. But they do me no favour in being directed by me. It is true, my reward is with the Lord. But at present I have nothing from it but trouble and care ; and often a burden I scarce know how to bear.

“4. In 1744 I wrote to several clergymen, and to all who then served me as sons in the Gospel, desiring them to meet me in London, to give me their advice concerning the best method of carrying on the work of God. They did not desire this meeting, but I did ; knowing that ‘in a multitude of counsellors there is safety.’ And when their number increased, so that it was neither needful nor convenient to invite them all, for several years I wrote to those with whom I desired to confer, and these only met at the place appointed ; till at length I gave a general permission, that all who desired it might come.

“Observe : I myself sent for these of my own free choice ; and I sent for them to advise, not govern, me. Neither did

I at any of those times divest myself of any part of that power above described, which the providence of God had cast upon me, without any design or choice of mine.

“What is that power? It is a power of admitting into, and excluding from, the Societies under my care; of choosing and removing stewards; of receiving or not receiving helpers; of appointing them when, where, and how, to help me; and of desiring any of them to meet me, when I see good. And as it was merely in obedience to the providence of God, and for the good of the people, that I at first accepted this power, which I never sought, nay, a hundred times laboured to throw off; so it is on the same considerations, not for profit, honour, or pleasure, that I use it at this day.

“5. But several gentlemen are much offended at my having so much power. My answer to them is this:—

“I did not seek any part of this power. It came upon me unawares. But when it was come, not daring to bury that talent, I used it to the best of my judgment.

“Yet I never was fond of it. I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden; the burden which God lays upon me, and therefore I dare not yet lay it down.

“But if you can tell me any one, or any five men, to whom I may transfer this burden, who can and will do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you.

“6. But some of our helpers say, ‘This is *shackling free-born Englishmen*,’ and demand a free Conference; that is, a meeting of all the preachers, wherein all things shall be determined by most votes.

“I answer, It is possible, after my death, something of this kind may take place; but not while I live. To *me* the preachers have engaged themselves to submit, to ‘serve me as sons in the Gospel.’ But they are not thus engaged to any man, or number of men, besides. To me the people in general will submit. But they will not yet submit to any other.

“It is nonsense, then, to call my using this power ‘*shackling free-born Englishmen*.’ None needs to submit to it,

unless he will; so there is no shackling in the case. Every preacher and every member may leave me when he pleases. But while he chooses to stay, it is on the same terms that he joined me at first.

“ ‘But this is *arbitrary power*; this is no less than *making yourself a Pope*.’

“ If by arbitrary power you mean a power which I exercise singly, without any colleagues therein, this is certainly true; but I see no hurt in it. *Arbitrary*, in this sense, is a very harmless word. If you mean unjust, unreasonable, or tyrannical, then it is not true.

“ As to the other branch of the charge, it carries no face of truth. The Pope affirms, that every Christian must do all he bids, and believe all he says, under pain of damnation. I never affirmed anything that bears any, the most distant, resemblance to this. All I affirm is, ‘The preachers who choose to labour with me, choose to serve me as sons in the Gospel;’ and ‘the people who choose to be under my care, choose to be so, on the same terms they were at first.’

“ Therefore, all talk of this kind is highly injurious to me, who bear this burden merely for *your* sakes. And it is exceedingly mischievous to the people, tending to confound their understandings, and to fill their hearts with evil surmisings and unkind tempers towards me; to whom they really owe more, for taking all this load upon me, for exercising this very power, for shackling myself in this manner, than for all my preaching put together. Because preaching twice or thrice a day is no burden to me at all; but the care of all the preachers and all the people is a burden indeed!”
—*Minutes*, vol. i. pp. 58—61.

II. COPY OF CASE SUBMITTED TO JOHN MADOCKS, ESQ., RESPECTING THE MEANS TO BE TAKEN TO FIX THE MEANING OF THE TERM CONFERENCE, AND HIS ANSWER.

“ Your opinion is requested—

“ Will the general description in the Deeds, ‘of the yearly

Conference of the people called Methodists in London, &c., together with the constant usage before-mentioned, be sufficient marks of *identity, personal, and legal description* of the very persons who actually do compose the Conference, as to carry the exercise of the trusts fully into them, and safely through them into their appointees, so effectually as to enable such appointees to *maintain and enforce* their right to the benefit of the trusts, in case of resistance on the part of the trustees, or any other persons; if not, what means would you advise to be taken for the aforesaid purposes?

“*Answer*—As to the means of fixing the sense of the word Conference, and defining what persons are to be members of the Conference, and how the body is to be continued in succession, and to identify it, I think Mr. John Wesley should prepare and subscribe a declaration for that purpose, to be enrolled in the Court of Chancery for safe custody, naming the present members, and prescribing the mode of election to fill vacancies, and making the Minutes or Memorials of their proceedings, signed by their Secretary, evidence of such elections, to which declaration of Mr. Wesley, so enrolled, all the Trusts Deeds should refer.

“JOHN MADOCKS.

“*Lincoln's Inn, Dec. 5, 1783.*”

III. AN ATTESTED COPY OF THE DEED-POLL EXECUTED BY MR. WESLEY, AND ENROLLED IN HER MAJESTY'S HIGH COURT OF CHANCERY.

“To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late of Lincoln College, Oxford, but now of the City Road, London, Clerk, sendeth greeting:—

“Whereas divers buildings, commonly called chapels, with a messuage and dwelling house, or other appurtenances, to each of the same belonging, situate in various parts of Great Britain, have been given and conveyed, from time to time, by the said John Wesley, to certain persons and their heirs,

in each of the said gifts and conveyances named ; which are enrolled in his Majesty's High Court of Chancery, upon the acknowledgment of the said John Wesley, (pursuant to the Act of Parliament in that case made and provided) ; upon trust, that the trustees in the said several deeds respectively named, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the trustees for the time being, to be elected as in the said deeds is appointed, should permit and suffer the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as he should for that purpose from time to time nominate and appoint, at all times during his life, at his will and pleasure, to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said premises, that he the said John Wesley, and such person and persons as he should nominate and appoint, might therein preach and expound God's Holy Word ; and upon further trust, that the said respective trustees, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the trustees for the time being, should permit and suffer Charles Wesley, brother of the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as the said Charles Wesley should for that purpose from time to time nominate and appoint, in like manner, during his life,—to have, use, and enjoy the said premises respectively, for the like purposes as aforesaid ; and after the decease of the survivor of them, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, then upon further trust, that the said respective trustees, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the trustees for the time being for ever, should permit and suffer such person and persons, and for such time and times, as should be appointed at the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid : And whereas divers persons have, in like manner, given or conveyed many chapels, with messuages and dwelling-houses, or other appurtenances, to the same belonging, situate in various parts of Great Britain, and also in Ireland, to certain trustees in each

of the said gifts and conveyances respectively named, upon the like trust, and for the same uses and purposes as aforesaid, (except only that in some of the said gifts and conveyances, no life-estate or other interest is therein or thereby given and reserved to the said Charles Wesley): And whereas, for rendering effectual the trusts created by the said several gifts or conveyances, and that no doubt or litigation may arise with respect unto the same, or the interpretation and true meaning thereof, it has been thought expedient by the said John Wesley, on behalf of himself, as donor of the several chapels, with the messuages, dwelling-houses, or appurtenances, before-mentioned, as of the donors of the said other chapels, with the messuages, dwelling-houses, or appurtenances, to the same belonging, given or conveyed to the like uses and trusts, to explain the words, 'Yearly Conference of the people called Methodists,' contained in all the said trust deeds, and to declare what persons are members of the said Conference, and how the succession and identity thereof is to be continued:—

"Now therefore these presents witness, that, for accomplishing the aforesaid purposes, the said John Wesley doth hereby declare, that the Conference of the people called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, ever since there hath been any yearly Conference of the said people called Methodists in any of the said places, hath always heretofore consisted of the preachers and expounders of God's Holy Word, commonly called Methodist preachers, in connexion with and under the care of the said John Wesley, whom he hath thought expedient year after year to summon to meet him, in one or other of the said places, of London, Bristol, or Leeds, to advise with them for the promotion of the Gospel of Christ, to appoint the said persons so summoned, and the other preachers and expounders of God's Holy Word, also in connexion with and under the care of the said John Wesley, not summoned to the said yearly Conference, to the use and enjoyment of the said chapels and premises so given

and conveyed upon trusts for the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as he should appoint during his life as aforesaid, and for the expulsion of unworthy and admission of new persons under his care, and into his connexion, to be preachers and expounders as aforesaid, and also of other persons upon trial for the like purposes; the names of all which persons so summoned by the said John Wesley, the persons appointed, with the chapels and premises to which they were so appointed, together with the duration of such appointments, and of those expelled or admitted into connexion or upon trial, with all other matters transacted and done at the said yearly Conference, have, year by year, been printed and published under the title of 'Minutes of Conference.'

"And these presents further witness, and the said John Wesley doth hereby avouch and further declare, that the several persons hereinafter named, to wit, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley; Thomas Coke, (8)* of the city of London, doctor of civil law; James Creighton, (1) of the same place, clerk; Thomas Tennant, (14) of the same place; Thomas Rankin, of the same place; Joshua Keighley, (4) of Seven-oaks, in the county of Kent; James Wood, (11) of Rochester, in the said county of Kent; John Booth, (5) of Colchester; Thomas Cooper, (3) of the same place; Richard Whatcoat, (15) of Norwich; Jeremiah Brettel, (13) of Lynn, in the county of Norfolk; Jonathan Parkin, (2) of the same place; Joseph Pescod, (8) of Bedford; Christopher Watkins, (16) of Northampton; John Barber, (3) of the same place; John Broadbent, (12) of Oxford; Joseph Cole, (4) of the same place; Jonathan Cousins, (4) of the city of Gloucester; John Brettel, (15) of the same place; John Mason, (20) of Salisbury; George Storey, (22) of the same place; Francis Wrigley, (15) of St. Austle, in the county of Cornwall; William Green, (4) of the city of Bristol; John Moon, (10)

* The figures after the names show the years which each had been in connection with the Conference at the time of his appointment in the Deed.

of Plymouth Dock; James Hall, (8) of the same place; James Thom, (1) of St. Austle, aforesaid; Joseph Taylor, (7) of Redruth, in the said county of Cornwall; William Hoskins, (2) of Cardiff, Glamorganshire; John Leech, (11) of Brecon; William Saunders, (7) of the same place; Richard Rodda, (15) of Birmingham; John Fenwick, (20) of Burslem, Staffordshire; Thomas Hanby, (30) of the same place; James Rogers, (12) of Macclesfield; Samuel Bardesley, (16) of the same place; John Murlin, (30) of Manchester; William Percival, (11) of the same place; Duncan Wright, (19) of the city of Chester; John Godwin, (16) of the same place; Parson Greenwood, (22) of Liverpool; Zechariah Udall, (5) of the same place; Thomas Vasey, (9) of the same place; Joseph Bradford, (14) of Leicester; Jeremiah Robertshaw, (22) of the same place; William Myles, (5) of Nottingham; Thomas Longley, (4) of Derby; Thomas Taylor, (23) of Sheffield; William Simpson, (5) of the same place; Thomas Carlill, (22) of Grimsby, in the county of Lincoln; Robert Scott, (2) of the same place; Joseph Harper, (17) of the same place; Thomas Corbit, (10) of Gainsborough, in the county of Lincoln; James Ray, of the same place; William Thompson, (27) of Leeds, in the county of York; Robert Roberts, (25) of the same place; Samuel Bradburn, (10) of the same place; John Valton, (9) of Birstal, in the said county; John Allen, (18) of the same place; Isaac Brown, (24) of the same place; Thomas Hanson, (24) of Huddersfield, in the said county; John Shaw, (22) of the same place; Alexander Mather, (27) of Bradford, in the said county; Joseph Benson, (13) of Halifax, in the said county; William Dufton, (11) of the same place; Benjamin Rhodes, (18) of Keighley, in the said county; John Easton, (22) of Colne, in the county of Lancaster; Robert Costerdine, (20) of the same place; Jasper Robinson, (12) of the Isle of Man; George Button, (5) of the same place; John Pawson, (22) of the city of York; Edward Jackson, (7) of Hull; Charles

Atmore, (3) of the said city of York; Lancelot Harrison, (18) of Scarborough; George Shadford, (16) of Hull, aforesaid; Barnabas Thomas, (18) of the same place; Thomas Briscoe, (33) of Yarm, in the said county of York; Christopher Peacock, (3) of the same place; William Thom, (10) of Whitby, in the said county of York; Robert Hopkins, (3) of the same place; John Peacock, (17) of Barnard Castle; William Collins, (17) of Sunderland; Thomas Dixon, (15) of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Christopher Hopper, (37) of the same place; William Boothby, (8) of the same place; William Hunter, (17) of Berwick-upon-Tweed; Joseph Saunderson, (9) of Dundee, Scotland; William Warrener, (5) of the same place; Duncan M'Allum, (9) of Aberdeen, Scotland; Thomas Rutherford, (12) of the city of Dublin, in the kingdom of Ireland; Daniel Jackson, (6) of the same place; Henry Moore, (5) of the city of Cork, Ireland; Andrew Blair, (6) of the same place; Richard Watkinson, (9) of Limerick, Ireland; Nehemiah Price, (11) of Athlone, Ireland; Robert Lindsey, of Sligo, Ireland; George Brown, (8) of Clones, Ireland; Thomas Barber, (5) of Charlemont, Ireland; Henry Foster, (4) of Belfast, Ireland; and John Crook, (9) of Lisburne, Ireland, gentlemen; being preachers and expounders of God's Holy Word, under the care and in connexion with the said John Wesley, have been, and now are, and do, on the day of the date hereof, constitute the members of the said Conference, according to the true intent and meaning of the said several gifts and conveyances wherein the words, Conference of the people called Methodists, are mentioned and contained; and that the said several persons before-named, and their successors for ever, to be chosen as hereafter mentioned, are and shall for ever be construed, taken, and be, the Conference of the people called Methodists. Nevertheless, upon the terms, and subject to the regulations hereinafter prescribed; that is to say,

"1. That the members of the said Conference, and their successors for the time being for ever, shall assemble once in

every year, at London, Bristol, or Leeds (except as after-mentioned), for the purposes aforesaid; and the time and place of holding every subsequent Conference shall be appointed at the preceding one, save that the next Conference after the date hercof shall be holden at Leeds, in Yorkshire, the last Tuesday in July next.

“2. The act of the majority in number of the Conference assembled as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, and be the act of the whole Conference, to all intents, purposes, and constructions whatsoever.

“3. That after the Conference shall be assembled as aforesaid, they shall first proceed to fill up all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence, as after-mentioned.

“4. No act of the Conference assembled as aforesaid shall be had, taken, or be the act of the Conference, until forty of the members thereof are assembled, unless reduced under that number by death since the prior Conference, or absence as after-mentioned; nor until all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence shall be filled up by the election of new members of the Conference, so as to make up the number one hundred, unless there be not a sufficient number of persons objects of such election; and, during the assembly of the Conference, there shall always be forty members present at the doing of any act, save as aforesaid, or otherwise such act shall be void.

“5. The duration of the yearly assembly of the Conference shall not be less than five days, nor more than three weeks, and be concluded by the appointment of the Conference, if under twenty-one days; or otherwise the conclusion thereof shall follow of course at the end of the said twenty-one days; the whole of all which said time of the assembly of the Conference shall be had, taken, considered, and be the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, and all acts of the Conference, during such yearly assembly thereof, shall be the acts of the Conference, and none other.

"6. Immediately after all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence are filled up, by the election of new members as aforesaid, the Conference shall choose a president and secretary of their assembly out of themselves, who shall continue such until the election of another president or secretary in the next, or other subsequent Conference; and the said president shall have the privilege and power of two members in all acts of the Conference during his presidency, and such other powers, privileges, and authorities, as the Conference shall from time to time see fit to entrust into his hands.

"7. Any member of the Conference absenting himself from the yearly assembly thereof for two years successively, without the consent or dispensation of the Conference, and be not present on the first day of the third yearly assembly thereof, at the time and place appointed for the holding of the same, shall cease to be a member of the Conference from and after the said first day of the said yearly assembly thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he were naturally dead. But the Conference shall and may dispense with or consent to the absence of any member from any of the said yearly assemblies, for any cause which the Conference may see fit or necessary; and such member, whose absence shall be so dispensed with or consented to by the Conference, shall not by such absence cease to be a member thereof.

"8. The Conference shall and may expel and put out from being a member thereof, or from being in connexion therewith, or from being upon trial, any person, member of the Conference, or admitted into connexion, or upon trial, for any cause which to the Conference may seem fit or necessary; and every member of the Conference so expelled and put out, shall cease to be a member thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he was naturally dead. And the Conference, immediately after the expulsion of any member thereof as aforesaid, shall elect another person to

be a member of the Conference, in the stead of such member so expelled.

"9. The Conference shall and may admit into connexion with them, or upon trial, any person or persons whom they shall approve, to be preachers and expounders of God's Holy Word, under the care and direction of the Conference; the name of every such person or persons so admitted into connexion or upon trial as aforesaid, with the time and degrees of the admission, being entered in the journals or minutes of the Conference.

"10. No person shall be elected a member of the Conference, who hath not been admitted into connexion with the Conference, as a preacher and expounder of God's Holy Word, as aforesaid, for twelve months.

"11. The Conference shall not, nor may, nominate or appoint any person to the use and enjoyment of, or to preach and expound God's Holy Word in any of the chapels and premises so given or conveyed, or which may be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, who is not either a member of the Conference, or admitted into connexion with the same, or upon trial as aforesaid; nor appoint any person, for more than three years successively, to the use and enjoyment of any chapel and premises already given, or to be given or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, except ordained ministers of the Church of England.

"12. That the Conference shall and may appoint the place of holding the yearly assembly thereof, at any other city, town, or place, than London, Bristol, or Leeds, when it shall seem expedient so to do.

"13. And for the convenience of the chapels and premises already, or which may hereafter be, given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, situate in Ireland, or other parts out of the kingdom of Great Britain, the Conference shall and may, when and as often as it shall seem expedient, but not otherwise, appoint and delegate any member or members of the Conference, with all or any of the powers, privileges, and

advantages, hereinbefore contained or vested in the Conference; and all and every the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments whatsoever of such member or members of the Conference, so appointed and delegated as aforesaid, the same being put into writing, and signed by such delegate or delegates, and entered in the journals or minutes of the Conference, and subscribed as after-mentioned, shall be deemed, taken, and be the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments of the Conference, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever, from the respective times when the same shall be done by such delegate or delegates; notwithstanding anything herein contained to the contrary.

“14. All resolutions and orders touching elections, admissions, expulsions, consents, dispensations, delegations, or appointments and acts whatsoever of the Conference, shall be entered and written in the journals or minutes of the Conference, which shall be kept for that purpose, publicly read, and then subscribed by the president and secretary thereof for the time being, during the time such Conference shall be assembled; and when so entered and subscribed, shall be had, taken, received, and be, the acts of the Conference, and such entry and subscription as aforesaid shall be had, taken, received, and be, evidence of all and every such acts of the said Conference, and of their said delegates, without the aid of any other proof; and whatever shall not be so entered and subscribed as aforesaid, shall not be had, taken, received, or be, the act of the Conference; and the said president and secretary are hereby required and obliged to enter and subscribe, as aforesaid, every act whatever of the Conference.

“Lastly. Whenever the said Conference shall be reduced under the number of forty members, and continue so reduced for three yearly assemblies thereof successively, or whenever the members thereof shall decline or neglect to meet together annually for the purposes aforesaid, during the space of three years, that then, and in either of the said events,

the Conference of the people called Methodists shall be extinguished, and all the aforesaid powers, privileges, and advantages shall cease, and the said chapels and premises, and all other chapels and premises, which now are, or hereafter may be, settled, given, or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, shall vest in the trustees for the time being of the said chapels and premises respectively, and their successors for ever; UPON TRUST that they, and the survivors of them, and the trustees for the time being, do, shall, and may appoint such person and persons to preach and expound God's Holy Word therein, and to have the use and enjoyment thereof, for such time, and in such manner, as to them shall seem proper.

"Provided always, that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to extinguish, lessen, or abridge the life-estate of the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, or either of them, of and in any of the said chapels and premises, or any other chapels and premises, wherein they, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, or either of them, now have, or may have, any estate or interest, power or authority whatsoever.

"In witness whereof, the said John Wesley hath hereunto set his hand and seal, the twenty-eighth day of February, in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third, by the grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

"JOHN WESLEY.

"Sealed and delivered (being first }
duly stamped) in the presence of }

"WILLIAM CLULOW, Quality Court, Chancery Lane, London.

"RICHARD YOUNG, Clerk to the said William Clulow.

"Taken and acknowledged by the Rev. John Wesley,

party hereto, this 28th of February, 1784, at the Public Office, before me,

“EDWARD MONTAGU.

“The above is a true copy of the original deed (which is enrolled in Chancery), and was therewith examined by us,

“WILLIAM CLULOW.

“RICHARD YOUNG.”

“ENDORSEMENT.

“*Dated Feb. 28th, 1784.*

“CLULOW.

“The Rev. John Wesley’s declaration and appointment of the Conference of the people called Methodists, enrolled in his Majesty’s High Court of Chancery, the ninth day of March, in the year of our Lord, 1784, being first duly stamped according to the tenor of the statutes made for that purpose.

“THOMAS BRIGSTOCK.”

IV. COPY OF PAPER INSERTED IN THE “ARMINIAN MAGAZINE,” BY THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, ENTITLED, “THOUGHTS UPON SOME LATE OCCURRENCES,” SHOWING MR. WESLEY’S OBJECT IN CONSTITUTING THE CONFERENCE BY THE ABOVE-RECITED DEED-POLL.

“1. In June, 1744, I desired my brother and a few other clergymen to meet me in London, to consider how we should proceed to save our own souls and those that heard us. After some time, I invited the lay preachers that were in the house to meet with us. We conferred together for several days, and were much comforted and strengthened thereby.

“2. The next year, I not only invited most of the travelling preachers, but several others, to confer with me in Bristol. And from that time, for some years, though I invited only

a part of the travelling preachers, yet I permitted any that desired it, to be present, not apprehending any ill consequences therefrom.

"3. But two ill consequences soon appeared; one, that the expense was too great to be borne; the other, that many of our people were scattered while they were left without a shepherd. I therefore determined, (1.) That for the time to come, none should be present but those whom I invited; and, (2.) That I would only invite a select number out of every circuit.

"4. This I did for many years, and all that time the term 'Conference' meant not so much the conversation we had together, as the persons that conferred; namely, those whom I invited to confer with me from time to time. So that all this time it depended on me alone, not only what persons should constitute the Conference,—but whether there should be any Conference at all, this lay wholly in my own breast; neither the preachers nor the people having any part or lot in the matter.

"5. Some years after, it was agreed, that, after the decease of my brother and me, the preachers should be stationed by the Conference. But ere long a question arose, What does that term mean? Who are the Conference? It appeared difficult to define the term. And, the year before last, all our brethren who were met at Bristol desired me to fix the determinate meaning of the word.

"6. Hitherto, it had meant (not the whole body of travelling preachers, it never bore that meaning at all; but) those persons whom I invited yearly to confer with me. But to this there was a palpable objection,—such a Conference would have no being after my death. And what other definition of it to give, I knew not; at least, I knew none that would stand good in law. I consulted a skilful and honest attorney; and he consulted an eminent counsellor, who answered, 'There is no way of doing this but by naming a determinate number of persons. The deed which

names these must be enrolled in Chancery: then it will stand good in law.'

"7. My first thought was to name a very few, suppose ten or twelve persons. Count Zinzendorf named only six, who were to preside over the community after his decease. But on second thoughts, I believed there would be more safety in a greater number of counsellors, and therefore named a hundred, as many as I judged could meet without too great an expense, and without leaving any circuit naked of preachers while the Conference met.

"8. In naming these preachers, as I had no adviser, so I had no respect of persons; but I simply set down those that, according to the best of my judgment, were most proper. But I am not infallible. I might mistake, and think better of some of them than they deserved. However, I did my best; and if I did wrong, it was not the error of my will, but of my judgment.

"9. This was the rise, and this is the nature, of that famous Deed of Declaration, that vile, wicked Deed, concerning which you have heard such an outcry! And now, can any one tell me how to mend it, or how it could have been made better? 'O yes. You might have inserted two hundred, as well as one hundred, preachers.' No; for then the expense of meeting would have been doubled, and all the circuits would have been without preachers. 'But you might have named other preachers instead of these.' True, if I had thought as well of them as they did of themselves. But I did not; therefore I could do no otherwise than I did, without sinning against God and my own conscience.

"10. 'But what need was there for any Deed at all?' There was the utmost need of it: without some authentic Deed fixing the meaning of the term, the moment I died the Conference had been nothing. Therefore, any of the proprietors of the land on which our preaching-houses were built might have seized them for their own use; and there would

have been none to hinder them ; for the Conference would have been nobody, a mere empty name.

"11. You see, then, in all the pains I have taken about this absolutely necessary Deed, I have been labouring, *not for myself*, (I have no interest therein,) *but for the whole body of Methodists* ; in order to fix them upon such a foundation as is likely to stand as long as the sun and moon endure. That is, if they continue to walk by faith, and to show forth their faith by their works ; otherwise, I pray God to root out the memorial of them from the earth."—*Arminian Magazine*, vol. viii., pp. 267—269.

V. COPY OF A LETTER BY REV. JONATHAN EDMONDSON, A.M., CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF "THE PLAN OF PACIFICATION."

"*To the Editor of the ' Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.'*

"I was not a little surprised, a few days ago, in reading the following positive assertion, in an address issued by a central committee in Manchester :—' Your fathers, after years of contention, wrung from an unwilling Conference the Plan of Pacification, of 1795.' This is one proof, among many which have fallen under my notice, that men, in the heat of controversy, do not always weigh their words in the balances of the sanctuary. It happens, that no man living, I believe, knows the origin of that plan but myself ; and I do declare, in the fear of God, that it originated with the preachers.

"The following is a correct statement :—I was stationed in London, under the superintendency of the Rev. William Thompson, in the year 1794 ; and as he had a shaking in his hand, by an attack of the palsy, I was his amanuensis all the year. One morning, as we were walking in the streets of London, to give tickets after the five o'clock service in Snow's Fields, he asked me what could be done to reconcile the preachers and the people in the painful struggle of that day. I replied in some such words as these, ' Sir, I am at a

loss how to answer you ; but I am of opinion that you can form some general plan of pacification.' He then told me what had occurred to him in thinking on the subject ; and expressed a wish that I would write out for him an outline of his plan on our return home. We spent several days in drawing it up ; and, when it was finished, I sent copies to many of our venerable fathers, particularly to Messrs. Mather, Pawson, Benson, and Dr. Coke. When the Conference met, in 1795, the plan was laid before a select committee, chosen by ballot, and was altered in a few particulars ; but that which I drew up for Mr. Thompson is substantially the same as that which was finally adopted by the Conference ; and I really believe, though I was not present, that it met with the cordial approbation, not only of our influential men, but of the whole Conference. Be not frightened at the phrase 'influential men.' Some men might call them a junto ('a cabal, a kind of men combined in any secret design'—*Johnson*) ; but I call them 'influential men,' because their age, experience, and wisdom, gave them an influence which they deserved. Great and good men were honoured in those days ; they are honoured now ; and they will be honoured while good sense and piety predominate in the Church.

"I am, yours affectionately,

"JONATHAN EDMONDSON.

"*Rochester, Jan. 15th, 1835.*"

VI. ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT FOR GENERAL PACIFICATION, 1795.

"I. *Concerning the Lord's Supper, Baptism, &c.*

"1. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees of that chapel on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people) on the other hand,

allow of it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be obtained, before the Lord's Supper be administered.

"2. Wherever there is a Society, but no chapel, if the majority of the stewards and leaders of that Society testify, that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's Supper should be administered to them, their desire shall be gratified; provided that the consent of the Conference be previously obtained.

"3. Provided, nevertheless, that in Mount Pleasant chapel, in Liverpool, and in all other chapels where the Lord's Supper has been already peaceably administered, the administration of it shall be continued in future.

"4. The administration of baptism, the burial of the dead, and service in Church-hours, shall be determined according to the regulations above-mentioned.

"5. Wherever the Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the before-mentioned regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order the contrary.

"6. The Lord's Supper shall be administered by those *only* who are authorised by the Conference; and at such times, and in such manner *only*, as the Conference shall appoint.

"7. The administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the above regulations, is intended only for the members of our own Society.

"8. We agree that the Lord's Supper be administered among us on Sunday evenings only; except where the majority of the stewards and leaders desire it in Church-hours; or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the parochial Church.

"9. The Lord's Supper shall always be administered, in England, according to the form of the Established Church: but the person who administers shall have full liberty to give out hymns, and to use exhortation and extemporary prayer.

"10. Wherever Divine service is performed in England, on the Lord's day, in Church-hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the Established Church, our venerable father's abridgment, or, at least, the lessons appointed by the calendar. But we recommend either the full service or the abridgment.

"II. *Concerning Discipline.*

"1. The appointment of preachers shall remain solely with the Conference ; and no trustee, or number of trustees, shall expel or exclude from their chapel or chapels any preachers so appointed.

"2. Nevertheless, if the majority of the trustees, or the majority of the stewards and leaders of any Society, believe that any preacher appointed for their circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, they shall have authority to summon the preachers of the district, and all the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the circuit, to meet in their chapel on a day and hour appointed (sufficient time being given). The chairman of the district shall be president of the assembly ; and every preacher, trustee, steward, and leader shall have a single vote, the chairman possessing also the casting vote. And if the majority of the meeting judge, that the accused preacher is immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from that circuit ; and the district committee shall, as soon as possible, appoint another preacher for that circuit, instead of the preacher so removed ; and shall determine among themselves how the removed preacher shall be disposed of till the Conference, and shall have authority to suspend the said preacher from all public duties till the Conference, if they judge proper. The district committee shall also supply, as well as possible, the place of the removed preacher, till another preacher be appointed. And the preacher thus

appointed, and all other preachers, shall be subject to the above mode of trial. And if the district committee do not appoint a preacher for that circuit, instead of the removed preacher, within a month after the aforesaid removal, or do not fill up the place of the removed preacher till another preacher be appointed, the majority of the said trustees, stewards, and leaders, being again regularly summoned, shall appoint a preacher for the said circuit, provided he be a member of the Methodist Connexion, till the ensuing Conference.

"3. If any preacher refuse to submit to the above mode of trial, in any of the cases mentioned above, he shall be considered as suspended till the Conference. And if any trustees expel from any chapel a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, the preachers appointed for that circuit shall not preach in that chapel till the ensuing Conference, or till a trial take place, according to the mode mentioned above.

"4. If any trustees expel or exclude a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, from any chapel in any circuit, the chairman of the district shall summon the members of the district committee, the trustees of that circuit who have not offended, and the stewards and leaders of the circuit. And the members of such assembly shall examine into the evidence on both sides; and if the majority of them determine that the state of the Society, in which the exclusion took place, requires that a new chapel should be built previous to the meeting of the Conference, every proper step shall be immediately taken for erecting such chapel. And no step shall on any account be taken to erect a chapel for *such purpose* before the meeting of the Conference, till such meeting be summoned, and such determination be made.

"5. No preacher shall be suspended or removed from his circuit by any district committee, except he have the privilege of the trial before mentioned.

"6. The hundred preachers mentioned in the enrolled

Deed, and their successors, are the only *legal* persons who constitute the Conference; and we think the junior brethren have no reason to object to this proposition, as they are regularly elected according to seniority.

"7. Inasmuch as, in drawing up the preceding regulations, we have laboured to restore and preserve the peace and unity of the Society, and, in order thereto, have endeavoured to keep the preachers out of all disputes on the subjects therein specified,—Be it understood, that any preacher who shall disturb the peace of the Society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper in our Societies, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, shall be subject to the trial and penalties before mentioned.

"8. And in order that the utmost impartiality may be manifest in these regulations, for the peace of the whole body, we also resolve, that if any local preacher, trustee, steward, or leader, shall disturb the peace of the Society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, the superintendent of the circuit, or the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the Society so disturbed, shall have authority to summon a meeting of the travelling preachers of the circuit, and the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that Society. Evidence shall be examined on both sides; and if the charge be proved, the superintendent preacher shall expel from the Society the person so offending."—*Minutes of Conference for the year 1795*, vol. i., pp. 322—325.

VII. REGULATIONS OF 1797, WITH SOME OF THE ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS OF THE SAME YEAR.

"*To the Methodist Societies.*

"Leeds, August 7th, 1797.

"DEAR BRETHREN,—We think it our duty to inform you, by the earliest opportunity, of the measures we have taken, in order to satisfy those of our brethren who have been made more or less uneasy by sundry publications circulated

through the Societies; and we trust that, on a serious consideration of the regulations we have agreed to at this Conference, you will see that the sacrifices, in respect to authority, which we have made on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers, evidence our willingness to meet our brethren in everything which is consistent with the existence of the Methodist discipline, and our readiness to be their servants for Jesus's sake.

"I. In respect to finances, or money-matters:—

"1. We have determined to publish annually a very minute account of the disbursement or application of the yearly collection; and,

"2. A full account of the affairs of Kingswood School.

"3. That all bills for the support of travelling preachers and their families, in respect to deficiencies, house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters of a temporal kind for their support, for which the circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee.

"II. In respect to all other temporal matters:—

"1. It has been determined, that no circuits shall be divided till such division has been approved of by their respective quarterly meetings, and signed by the general stewards.

"2. That no other temporal matter shall be transacted by the district committees, till the approbation of the respective quarterly meetings be first given, signed by the circuit stewards.

"III. In respect to the receiving and excluding private members of the Society:—

"1. The leaders' meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial improper to be received into the Society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into the Society.

"2. No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a leaders' meeting.

"IV. In respect to the appointment and removal of leaders, stewards, and local preachers, and concerning meetings:—

"1. No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders' meeting: the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation to be in the leaders' meeting.

"2. The former rule concerning local preachers is confirmed; namely, 'That no person shall receive a plan as a local preacher, without the approbation of a local-preachers' meeting.'

"3. In compliance with a request made by the committee of persons from various parts, namely, 'That the Conference be requested to re-consider and revise those rules which relate to the calling of meetings, and appointing local preachers, made last year,' we say, 'No local preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that circuit which he visits.' The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of local preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money, or by living upon them; and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them. But it never was intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers, whom, considered as a body, we greatly respect. And it should not be lost sight of, that several of the most respectable local preachers in the kingdom, who were in the committee which met the committee of preachers appointed

by the Conference, declared their high approbation of the rule, and desired that it might be strengthened as much as possible, as none could justly complain of it.

"4. As the committee above-mentioned requested, also, that the Minutes of the last Conference, concerning the calling of meetings to consider of the affairs of the Society or Connexion, be explained; and, as we are exceedingly desirous of preserving the peace and union of the whole body, we have agreed upon the following explanation: namely,—

"(1). As the leaders' meeting is the proper meeting for the Society, and the quarterly meeting for the circuit, we think that other formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences: But,

"(2). In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, we allow that other formal meetings may be held, if they receive the approbation of the superintendent and the leaders' or quarterly meeting; provided also, that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting.

"V. We have selected all our ancient rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential rules, or prudential at this present time; and have solemnly signed them; declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them, one single preacher excepted,* who, in consequence, withdrew from us.

"VI. We have determined, that all the rules which relate to the Societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings, shall be published with the rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members.

* Before the Conference concluded, two other preachers withdrew.

“VII. In respect to all new rules which shall be made by the Conference :—

“It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the Societies at large, and such rule shall be objected to at the first quarterly meeting in any given circuit ; and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion that the enforcing of such rule in that circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that circuit ; it shall not be enforced, in opposition to the judgment of such quarterly meeting, before the second Conference. But, if the rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the quarterly meetings rejecting a new rule, shall not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention ; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion.

“Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings.

“1. We have delivered the whole of our yearly collection to your management ; for we know, by experience, that the bills of the quarterly meetings, if only *mere* justice be done to the preachers and their families, will amount to much more than the yearly collection. The Conference will, in this business, have no authority whatsoever : they will have nothing but the trouble of receiving the money and paying the bills which shall have been sent to them from the quarterly meetings, and been approved of by the district committees. And when the accounts are published by the Conference, every quarterly meeting may compare its own accounts with those of the Conference, and thereby have as complete a check as the nature of things can possibly admit of.

“The Conference has reserved to itself the management of its own book-concerns. This is most reasonable : as the

institution was established for the carrying on of the work of God, under the direction of Mr. Wesley and the Conference; was continued, by the deed or codicil of Mr. Wesley's will, for the use of the Conference; as the whole burden of the management of the business lies upon the Conference, and the servants they employ, and on the superintendents of circuits; and also, as it is the only fund which can supply any deficiencies of the yearly collection, as the accounts published in our Minutes for several years past clearly evidence, the yearly collection having not been nearly sufficient for the wants of the preachers and families, and for the carrying on of the work of God in general.

"2. The whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the quarterly meetings, the district meetings having nothing left them but a negative.

"3. Our Societies have a full check on the superintendent, by the means of their leaders' meeting, in regard to the introduction of persons into Society; whilst the superintendent has sufficient scope allowed him for the increase of the Societies, not only according to the common course of things, but at the times of remarkable out-pourings of the Spirit of God.

"4. The members of our Societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions; as *that* superintendent would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.

"5. There is now no Society officer among us, who can be received without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs; nor can any officer be appointed, except upon the same plan.

"6. In order to prevent any degree of precipitation in

making new rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such rule, we have agreed to the article mentioned under the seventh head, by which no regulations will be finally confirmed, till after a year's consideration, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of all their public officers.

“In short, brethren, out of our great love for peace and union, and our great desire to satisfy your minds, we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority: and if we consider that the quarterly meetings are the sources from whence all temporal regulations, during the intervals of the Conference, must now originally spring; and also that the Committee, formed according to the Plan of Pacification, can, in every instance in which the trustees, leaders, and stewards choose to interfere respecting the gifts, doctrines, or moral character of preachers, supersede, in a great measure, the regular district committees; we may, taking all these things into our view, truly say, that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draught of the stations of the preachers. And, besides all this, we have given the quarterly meetings opportunities of considering every new law, of suspending the execution of it for a year in their respective circuits, and of sending their sentiments on it to the Conference, before it be finally confirmed.

“We have represented these measures, which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of the whole, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition, that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. In the *regulations* which *will be published* with the rules of

the Society, as mentioned above, you will have the whole at large. We are, your affectionate brethren,

"Signed, in behalf and by order of the Conference,

"THOMAS COKE, *President*.

"SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary*.

"SUNDRY MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

"I. *With respect to Districts.*

"1. In order to render our districts more effective, the President of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a circuit with preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of preachers which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of the Conference. And to assist at any district meeting, if applied to for that purpose, by the chairman of the district, or by a majority of the superintendents in such districts. And he shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism, and, in union with the district committee, redress any grievance.

"2. The chairman of each district, in conjunction with his brethren of the committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his district is concerned.

"3. That no chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary district meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the district committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything till the Conference.

"4. The Conference recommends it to the superintendents of the circuits to invite, on all important occasions, the chairman of their respective district to be present at their quarterly meetings.

"5. The chairman of every district shall be chosen by the ballot of the Conference, after the names of all the preachers in the district have been read to them by the secretary.

"II. *As to Delegates.*

"The Conference, having maturely considered the subject, are thoroughly persuaded, with many of our Societies, whose letters have been read in full Conference, that they cannot admit any but regular travelling preachers into their body, either in the Conference or district meetings, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the itinerant plan, which they are determined to support. But let it be well observed, that, in explaining their Minutes, it was fully and explicitly understood, that if there be any accusation against a preacher, or any difficult affair to settle, not only the circuit or town steward, but any leader, or even member of the Society, shall be admitted as evidence to the district meeting; provided the matter has been first heard at a quarterly meeting.

"III. *With regard to Preachers.*

"1. Before any superintendent propose a preacher to the Conference, as proper to be admitted on trial, such preacher must not only be approved of at the March quarterly meeting, but must have read and signed the General Minutes, as fully approving of them. Nor must any one suppose, or pretend to think, that the conversations which have been on any of these Minutes were intended so to qualify them, as in the least to affect the spirit and design of them.

"2. No local preacher shall keep love-feasts without the consent of the superintendent, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his own station."—*Minutes of the Conference*, vol. i., pp. 374—380.

VIII. EXPLANATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF 1835.

The following three sections of the Special Address of the Conference of 1835, contain the explanations and modifications which were made in that year :—

“I. *Financial Affairs.*

“1. The Conference has long felt it to be both just and expedient, and to themselves (as a body of Christian ministers) *exceedingly agreeable*, that the active management of the financial affairs of the Connexion, whether local or general, should be undertaken, as far as possible, by laymen of established character for integrity, Christian principle, and steadfast attachment to the interests of Methodism,—accustomed to the transaction of similar business,—able to command sufficient leisure for such ‘labours of love’ as are needed in this department of the ‘work of the Lord,’—and willing to consecrate that leisure to the service of our common cause. The Conference heartily concurs in the principle, that those of our public funds which are wholly or chiefly supported by the contributions of our people at large, (although these contributions, as it is well known, are principally *obtained* by the public exertions and private applications of the preachers themselves,) should be expended, under the general direction of the Conference, by *committees*, composed not of preachers only, but of *preachers and laymen conjointly*. In our *very peculiar* system of Itinerancy and Connexional Union, the assistance of the preachers in such committees will always be found indispensable to the good practical working of the several funds; because *they* obviously possess a more intimate and personal acquaintance with the circumstances and necessities of our work, in its varied relations and mutual bearings, and in its now widely-extended field of operation, than *local men*, however able and devoted, can possibly acquire. And it would not be equitable or reasonable to demand, that those whose influence and activity are mainly relied upon for

procuring pecuniary support to our institutions, and whose individual and ministerial character is therefore *pledged to the public* for the right application of the funds which they are employed to advocate and maintain, should be systematically excluded from the committees to which those funds are confided. On the other hand, it is equally just and advantageous that the body of contributors should have, in the respectable lay-members united with the preachers in the committees, a sufficient *security* for the proper and careful expenditure of the public money. By the plan of mixed committees both these objects are accomplished; and all parties, who, either by personal service or pecuniary benevolence, have a share in the work of *contribution*, are enabled to exercise a fair and salutary influence in the subsequent work of *distribution*.

“2. These views and principles *are not new* in the Wesleyan-Methodist Connexion. They have been for many years in extensive operation among us. The shameless assertions of some modern adversaries of our body, that our people have little or no share, according to our existing economy, in the management of their financial concerns, and that the preachers are desirous to have in their own hands either the exclusive control, or the *onerous* and *active* management, of the public funds of the body, is a calumny which the Conference are bold to meet with a positive and justly indignant denial. Most gladly would they be exempted, if a sufficient number of other persons, of adequate leisure and influence, could be found to undertake the task, from much of that labour, even in *soliciting* pecuniary support for our work, to which the necessity of the case, and their love for the cause of God, alone induce them now to submit.

“3. It is matter of notoriety, that *all the local contributions* of our Societies and friends, constituting by far the largest portion of the whole financial concerns of the Connexion, are now, and have been for a long series of years,

regularly paid into the hands of the Society stewards and circuit stewards annually appointed for this purpose, and expended by them, or under their entire superintendence and direction, according to our established usages and rules. A report of their management in these matters is constantly made by the stewards to the quarterly meetings of their respective circuits.

“As to the contributions to those *public funds*, by which our various institutions for the general purposes of the Connexion, or for objects of piety and benevolence, are supported, they are, in like manner, *generally* expended under the superintendence of *mixed* committees, constituted on the principles above stated. Every *security* which can be reasonably desired in a *religious* community like ours is thus afforded, that the moneys liberally contributed shall be honestly expended in effecting the great purposes for which they are solicited and designed. This has long been the established practice with respect to *the Missionary Fund*, and *the General Chapel Fund*. Last year, the Conference spontaneously applied the same principle to *the School Fund*; and they are now not merely willing, but anxious, that it should be fully extended also to the *only two remaining* funds, which are at all materially or generally aided by the contributions of our people; namely, *the Contingent Fund*, and *the Preachers' Auxiliary Fund*.

“With respect to *the Contingent Fund*, which derives its means of usefulness principally from what are termed *the Yearly Collection* in the classes, and *the July* or *Home Missionary Collection*, in our congregations, and to which the Conference affords considerable aid by a voluntary donation from the profits of our Book-room,—the largest part of its annual income, by much, is employed in supplying the deficiencies of the poorer and smaller circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, and especially those of new and infant stations, unable, as yet, to meet fully their own local expenses. These, which are called *the Ordinary Deficiencies*,

are regularly examined, and adjusted, for the current year, at the financial district meetings in September, and the subsequent annual district meetings in May; when *two circuit stewards* from each circuit in the district are earnestly requested to attend, and have an equal right with the preachers to speak and vote on every financial question. The whole grant made from the Contingent Fund to that district is divided among the several *claimant circuits* in their presence, and with their assistance and concurrence. Thus, by far the greatest portion even of *the Contingent Fund* is *already* placed under an efficient control, by means of a *mixed* meeting. It only remains to apply the same principle to the distribution of that part of the same fund which is expended on what are called *the Extraordinary Deficiencies* of the year; including grants for 'Travelling Expenses,' — 'Afflictions,' — 'Furniture' for preachers' houses,—and 'Miscellaneous Expenses' of various kinds, especially those connected with the executive department of our general work, as directed by the Conference, and the due administration of our discipline. These 'extraordinaries' have hitherto, for the sake of convenience, been settled at the time of the annual Conference, in a meeting of the chairmen of the several districts. But the Conference now resolves as follows: viz.—

"(1.) That the entire portion of the business of the Contingent Fund, which cannot be finally settled by the preachers and stewards in the local district meetings, shall henceforth be confided to a *mixed* committee, who shall meet in the week before the annual assembly of the Conference, and be called, 'the Committee of the Contingent Fund,' consisting of the President and Secretary of the Conference, and of thirty other members, viz., *fifteen preachers*, to be annually appointed by the Conference, and *fifteen laymen*, to be annually chosen from the districts which are most contiguous to the place where the Conference is to be held, or from which it is likely that laymen of

suitable leisure and information may be induced to attend the ensuing Conference. The appointment of these lay-members shall rest *exclusively* with the *circuit stewards* of those districts which shall be specified in the Minutes of the Conference, from year to year, as most conveniently situated for this purpose; and shall take place at the time of their assembly in the *May* district meetings, as soon as they shall have finished the business connected with the *ordinary* deficiencies of their respective districts.

“(2.) That *two* treasurers and two secretaries of the Contingent Fund shall be annually appointed, who shall be *ex officio* members of the committee. One of the treasurers shall in future be a lay-member of the Society.

“(3.) That the same committee, or such members of it as can conveniently be present, shall be the *committee of distribution*, who shall meet at the close of each Conference, or as soon as the stations of the preachers shall have been finally settled, for the purpose of allotting to *each district* its fair and necessary share, according to its means and probable expenditure, of the gross sum which they may deem it proper to devote, out of the estimated income of the ensuing year, to the payment of ‘ordinary deficiencies’ in the circuits. At this final meeting they shall also *complete* the settlement of the ‘extraordinaries’ for the *past* year, by examining those items of *miscellaneous expenditure*, belonging to that department, the exact amount of which could not be ascertained at an earlier period, because they necessarily depend upon various executive arrangements which can be determined only during the course of the proceedings of each successive Conference.

“(4.) That to the said mixed committee of the Contingent Fund shall likewise be confided, at their meeting in the week before the Conference, the duty of examining and regulating the affairs of *the Children’s Fund*; for which purpose the two treasurers of that fund (one of whom shall, as now, be always a lay-member of the Society), and also its secretary,

when he can conveniently attend the Conference, shall be *ex officio* members of the committee of the Contingent Fund.

"(5.) That the chairman and the financial secretary of each district shall be desired to attend the meetings of the committee of the Contingent Fund, during the time at which the applications from that district shall be under consideration, in order to state in person the cases which they have to recommend, as agreed upon at their respective district meetings in May, and to make the committee fully acquainted with the circumstances of every claimant circuit or individual.

"4. In reference to *the Preachers' Auxiliary Fund*, the Conference resolves as follows : viz.—

"(1.) That the annual distribution of the sums contributed by our friends to this fund shall in future be entrusted to a committee, consisting of the president and secretary of the Conference, with *eleven preachers*, and *eleven laymen*, to be appointed from year to year by the Conference: such distribution being conducted according to the general plans and regulations hitherto adopted, and on the principles of a becoming tenderness and respectful feeling towards the aged preachers, or widows or orphan children of deceased preachers, who may apply for assistance; as well as with a sacred regard to the *confidential* character of any communications made by them, or on their behalf, in reference to their private affairs and necessities.

"(2.) That *two* treasurers, one preacher, and *one layman*, and also a secretary, shall be appointed at each Conference, who shall be *ex officio* members of the committee.

"(3.) The treasurer for the time being of *the Seniors' Fund*, which is partially assisted by an annual grant from the Auxiliary Fund, shall also be *ex officio* a member of the committee of that fund; in order that he may give such information as may be deemed necessary or advantageous.

“II. *Expulsion of Members.*

“1. During the life of Mr. Wesley, and for a short period afterwards, the superintendent (formerly called ‘the assistant’) possessed, according to the primitive rules and established usage of the Connexion, the entire and unrestricted power of excluding from the Society any members whom, on account of their habitual and persevering violation of the laws of God, or of any of our general rules, he judged to be improper for our Christian communion. This power was subject only, in the case of an appeal, to the paternal interference of Mr. Wesley, while he lived, and, after his death, to that of the district committees and of the Conference. (See the 7th head of the General Rules, dated May 1st, 1743.)

“2. It was subsequently agreed, in 1794 (see Minutes, vol. i., p. 299), to regulate and limit the power of the superintendent, by a formal engagement then made on the part of the Conference, that the preachers should ‘*consult* the stewards and leaders,’ before they proceeded to any act of expulsion; the admission and expulsion of members being, however, at the same time, explicitly recognised as among those ‘*spiritual* concerns of the Society,’ which, in contradistinction to ‘*temporal* concerns,’ had ‘*ever*’ been, and should continue to be, ‘*managed by the preachers.*’ This legal provision for ‘*consultation*’ applied to members *generally*. But a distinct and special provision was made, in the same year, in reference to *trustees*; viz.—‘No trustee (however accused, or defective in conforming to the established rules of the Society) shall be removed from the Society, unless his crime or breach of the rules of the Society be *proved in the presence of the trustees and leaders.*’

“3. At length, in 1797 (see Minutes, vol. i., p. 375), instead of this simple ‘*consultation*’ of the stewards and leaders, it was enacted, that *no person* should be expelled for immorality, till such immorality had been ‘*proved at a leaders’ meeting*;’ or, as this clause appears to have been

afterwards explained, '*proved to the satisfaction*' of the leaders' meeting. And the intention of this new enactment is officially recorded to have been, to deliver the members of our Societies from every apprehension of *clandestine* expulsions. 'That superintendent,' it is stated, 'would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice *in the presence* of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.'

"4. The case to which this rule of 1797 applies, must necessarily be understood as being that of a member who *demand*s a trial at the leaders' meeting. 'The far greater number,' it is truly stated, '*exclude themselves*, by utterly forsaking us.' (See 'Form of Discipline,' 1797, sect. vi.) Continued absence from the class meeting, or other means of grace, without any sufficient reason, or some manifest breach of the laws of God, or of the particular rules of our own Connexion, is usually in such cases reported by the class leader to the preacher, at the time of the quarterly visitation. If there be no denial of the fact, or satisfactory defence against the charge, on the part of the member, or of his friends who may be present, and if the preacher, in the case of alleged crime or misconduct, be of opinion that the offence is one of such grave and serious character as to require some public testimony of disapprobation, the immediate exclusion of the negligent or offending member has usually resulted, quietly, and as a matter of course, by the preacher's withholding his Society ticket, and erasing his name from the class book. But if the member, so charged, deny the allegation of a wilful neglect of our peculiar discipline as to class meetings, &c., or of a breach of some law of Scripture, or rule of Methodism, and demand a trial, for the proof or disproof thereof, before the leaders' meeting, or before a committee of leaders appointed by that meeting, then such trial must, as our law now stands, and has stood ever since

1797, be forthwith conceded. If a majority of the leaders who vote at the meeting shall be 'satisfied' that sufficient proof is adduced, to establish the fact of a wilful and habitual negligence, or of the violation of some Scriptural or Methodistical rule, and shall give a verdict to that effect, then the leaders' meeting has discharged *its whole part* of the painful duty to be performed, and the case is left in the hands of the superintendent. On *him* devolves, in his pastoral character, as the person whose peculiar call and province it is to 'watch over that soul,' as one that 'must give an account,' the sole right and duty of deciding on the measures to be adopted towards the offender, in consequence of the verdict thus pronounced. He must consider his solemn responsibility, personally and officially, to God and to the church of Christ, and his special obligation to care most tenderly and anxiously for the spiritual and eternal welfare of the individual whose conduct is implicated; and, impartially applying the laws of God, as found in the Holy Scriptures, or the specific rules of our body (as the case may be), to the facts which have been declared to have been proved, as involving a violation of those laws or rules, he must prayerfully form the best judgment he can, respecting the nature and degree of the ecclesiastical penalty most fit to be inflicted; whether censure and reproof, in private or in public,—temporary suspension from Methodistical privileges,—putting the member back again into a state of mere probation,—or, finally, the extreme penalty of expulsion.

"5. This the Conference solemnly declare to be, in their conscientious judgment, the import and intent, even according to the most *large* and *liberal* interpretation which can with truth and fairness be given, of our rules and usages, collectively considered, and as they now exist, in reference to this part of our pastoral discipline. The power of determining the sentence to be passed on an offender, thus uniformly, and from the beginning, reserved to our superintendents, the Conference believe to be essential to the

scriptural duties and functions of the pastoral office. Those duties and functions they can on no account consent to abandon, or permit to be frittered away; for that would seriously endanger the purity and peace of our Connexion, on the one hand, and the rights, liberties, and spiritual privileges of our people, on the other hand. The pastoral duty and power vested in the Christian ministry, to exclude obstinate offenders from our religious fellowship, for manifest violation of the general laws of the Holy Scriptures, or of the particular rules of our Connexion, are clearly essential to peace and purity. The correlative power of the pastor, who, if a man of God, 'naturally cares' for the flock, to decide, after the case has been proved, on the adoption either of some mild and corrective sentence, or of the severer one of expulsion, according to his own deliberate and conscientious views of the whole affair, and all its circumstances, is equally essential to the *protection* of an accused individual from the effects of personal prejudice or irritation, or of popular excitement and undue local influence.

"6. Asserting, however, in the strongest manner, the scriptural principles now stated, and which have governed our discipline from the beginning, the Conference do nevertheless most cheerfully agree to adopt the following *Additional Guards and Securities* to our people, for the *proper exercise* of the powers confided to superintendents in cases of expulsion:—

"(1.) No sentence of expulsion shall hereafter be pronounced by any superintendent *in the same meeting* at which the *trial* shall have taken place.—To afford time for full inquiry into the past character of the party, and other circumstances, and for calm and careful deliberation, the sentence shall be deferred for *at least one week* after the trial; unless the superintendent be fully satisfied at once, that the case is one in which some of the milder forms of discipline should alone be adopted, and that expulsion is not at all to be contemplated,

"(2.) In difficult or doubtful cases, the superintendent is now further directed, not to proceed to the actual sentence of expulsion without privately asking information from such individual leaders, or other judicious and experienced members of the Society, as are most likely to put him into full possession of all the circumstances necessary to his forming, with due discretion and caution, his own final judgment on the subject.

"(3.) Every case of proposed expulsion shall be brought by the superintendent before the weekly meeting of the preachers of his circuit, in order that he may have the advantage of hearing the opinions and advice of his colleagues and co-pastors, before he shall finally decide on the course he ought to adopt.

"(4.) In all cases of dissatisfaction with the sentence of expulsion, pronounced by a superintendent, the aggrieved person shall have, as heretofore, the right of appeal to the annual meeting of the preachers of his district, and even, if still dissatisfied, to the Conference; who will hear him by a committee, or by a special deputation, and endeavour to decide according to truth, and to the requirements of Holy Scripture and of our discipline.

"(5.) But as it is readily admitted that the appeal to the full district committee, or to the Conference, may possibly be found, practically, too inconvenient to admit of a sufficiently prompt and easy application, except in cases of extraordinary interest and importance; the Conference now agrees and resolves,—That the *principle* of the rule of 1793, (see Minutes, vol. i., p. 277,) respecting the appointment of *minor* district committees in the case of preachers, shall be extended also to the case of all excluded members, who choose to avail themselves of its provisions. An excluded person shall, therefore, have the right of selecting *any two* preachers of the district to which his circuit belongs, and the superintendent shall select *two other* such preachers; and these four, with the chairman of the dis-

trict, (or if it happen that the chairman is himself the superintendent whose act is impugned, then some other preacher to be chosen by the four other members, as their chairman *pro tempore*,) shall meet in some convenient place, and shall have the power of modifying, reversing, or confirming the sentence against which such appeal shall be made. Their decision shall in such case be binding on all parties, unless subsequently altered, on further appeal, by the full district committee, or by the Conference.

“(6.) These additional guards and securities for our people against the possibility of rash and unwarrantable expulsions, by granting an appeal from the decision of an individual superintendent to the collective judgment and wisdom of *a number of pastors*, being cheerfully adopted, the Conference considers it both necessary and reasonable, at the same time, to provide an equally easy, prompt, and convenient remedy for *another case*, which may possibly arise, in seasons of peculiar excitement, though it is confidently hoped that it will be found to be one of only rare occurrence. The case intended, is that of the majority of a leaders’ meeting, before whom a member accused may be put on his trial, being induced, through some undue local interest, or influence, or prejudice, so far to forget its duty to God, and to the purity, peace, and good order of our Connexion, as to bring in, factiously and perversely, a verdict notoriously inconsistent with *the facts proved*, and with the plain and obvious meaning, and the general or specific regulations, of *the laws of God, or of our own body*, as applicable to these facts,—or as even, in certain conceivable cases, to refuse to give any verdict at all;—thus, in either case, defeating the ends of public justice, and preventing, by an abuse of their constitutional functions, the exercise of that discipline which Christ has commanded, and for which He has made the ministers of his church responsible to Himself. It is true, that our present rules provide an ultimate remedy for such an occasional and extraordinary

occurrence, by the powers given to regular and special district committees, in 1791, 1792, and subsequent years, and confirmed and extended in 1797. But that remedy, though sufficient, when actually called into operation, to provide for 'any critical case,' and to 'redress any grievance,' is not of easy and convenient application. There is the same reason for affording *facilities* of redress to a superintendent, obstructed in his pastoral duties by the prevalence of a contumacious and factious spirit, as for granting those facilities to an aggrieved member, complaining of the prejudice or severity of his superintendent. The Conference therefore resolves—That a superintendent, complaining of any leaders' meeting, for refusing to act its constitutional part, or for acting it factiously, or in contradiction to law and evidence, in the trial of an accused member, shall have the same right of prompt appeal to the revision of a *minor* district committee, as has just been granted to an excluded member in the other case supposed.

"7. In almost every case, it is presumed that this minor district committee will be sufficient to accomplish the purposes of general peace and purity, and, at least, 'settle everything till the Conference.' But if not, there is still in reserve, where it may be found absolutely necessary, the power of calling a *special* district meeting, consisting of the whole number of the Christian pastors of that district, who shall be in full connexion with the Conference, according to our existing rules respecting district committees; whose powers, either in the cases here particularly intended, or in any other cases, nothing contained in this document shall be construed to weaken or abridge. In reference to the constitution of *special district meetings*, on whatever subject such meetings may hereafter be deemed necessary, and in order to render their decisions satisfactory to our people, the Conference resolves—That instead of 'three of the nearest superintendents,' chosen by the superintendent who calls the meeting, *four* superintendents, or *other* preachers,

may be called in, if either party desire such assistance, and be incorporated with the preachers stationed in the district. Of these, *two shall be chosen by each of the two parties* concerned in the affairs to be settled by the meeting. The parties may severally make choice of preachers in whom they have most confidence, from *any* district, *without restriction as to contiguity*; and the President of the Conference, if he judge it expedient, may attend and preside in all such assemblies, according to the regulations of 1797. The right of appeal to the Conference from the decisions of this, as of all other inferior jurisdictions, is to be considered as reserved to all parties.

"8. In the preceding articles of this document, reference has been repeatedly made to the *law of God contained in the Holy Scriptures*, as furnishing, in the trial of members, that *primary* standard of judgment, by which the innocence or culpability of any particular facts adduced in evidence is ever to be determined. This principle, though obvious, and scarcely needing argumentative defence, the Conference have advisedly made prominent in this statement of their views. Any conduct in a man professing godliness, which can be shown to be decidedly condemned by the precepts and principles of the New Testament, is surely sufficient to justify, if persisted in, the application of a suitable ecclesiastical censure, or other penalty, to such an individual; even though it may not have been previously found necessary to make a distinct and specific rule of our own Society on that exact mode and form of delinquency. The New Testament *law of purity*, in reference both to the pastors and members of the Christian Church, and with respect both to doctrine and practice,—its often-repeated *law of peace*, and *godly quietness*,—and its *laws of courtesy, brotherly kindness*, and mutual *charity*—as well as its direction that 'all things' should 'be done decently and in order,' and its requirement of reasonable submission, on the part of Church members, to the scriptural 'rule' of those who are

'over them in the Lord,'—these are *standing enactments* of the Gospel, binding on all Christian communities, and therefore binding on the Methodist Societies, without exception. Any obstinate violation of them must be suitably visited, when proved; or else the authority of Jesus Christ himself, as the Lord and Master of our department of his spiritual house, will be criminally set at nought; and He will have just cause to say to the ministers and pastors of our community, as He did to one of old time, 'I have somewhat against thee.'

"9. On considering, in connexion with these scriptural principles, the present state of several circuits, and the system of organised agitation and disturbance in which certain persons have publicly threatened to proceed, in the course of the coming year, the Conference deem it necessary to take this opportunity of explicitly declaring their views on that subject, and of giving such general directions to the superintendents as the exigency appears to demand.

"The self-called 'Grand Central Association,' considered as to its character of *confederacy* and *combination*, and its extensive schemes of disorder and mischief, is, in those respects, somewhat unusual and strange; and some other persons, also, avoiding a *formal* connexion with the Association, have applied themselves, with unwonted activity and insidious concert, to plans and efforts of factious agitation. Hence some of the friends of good order have supposed that *new* rules were wanting to check these new forms of evil, and have called on the Conference to protect, by some additional enactments, the peaceable and well-disposed members of our numerous Societies from the menaced annoyance and insult. It should, however, be considered that the circumstances which are most characteristic and essential in the constitution and conduct of the 'Association,' and in the proceedings of other agents of faction, are plainly contrary even to *our existing rules and usages*, and to those *principles*, conservative of purity and peace, which the Conference has

ever recognised, and guarded by strong enactments. Thus, in 1795, it was resolved, that any local preacher, trustee, steward; or leader, who should disturb the peace of the Connexion by speaking for or against 'the old or new plan,' then the subject of eager contention, should be expelled from the Society. And in 1796 it was enjoined, that 'no man or number of men in our Connexion should, on any account or occasion, be allowed to circulate letters, or call meetings,' for the purpose of stirring up our people to divisive and innovating agitations. Such plans and proceedings, moreover, are plainly opposed to the supreme and unrepeatable *law of Christ* in the New Testament, already repeatedly referred to in this Address. 'Debates, envyings, wraths; strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults;' are there deprecated and condemned in the strongest and most affecting terms. We are enjoined to mark them that *cause divisions*,—if any man that is called a brother be a *railer*, with such an one, no not to eat,—to live in peace, that the God of love may be with us,—to let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour; and evil-speaking, be put away from us,—to follow peace with all men,—if it be possible, as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all men,—to know them which labour among us, and are over us in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among ourselves,—to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,—and, finally, to desire that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. St. James declares that 'where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work; but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.' The Conference, for these reasons, deem it unnecessary at present to provide against these modern forms of offence by any new and more specific regulation;

because so much of *moral evil* and *unchristian practice* is involved in the plans and proceedings of the said Association,—and of other similar confederacies, by whatever name disguised,—that to give them countenance, or to co-operate with them, is to be a partaker and abettor of various palpable transgressions of the commandments of God, and a violator, in some instances, of the letter, and in others, of the whole spirit and tenor, of our established rules. It is, therefore, hereby declared to be the unanimous judgment of the Conference,—That any person who, instead of *peaceably retiring* from our Connexion, if he decidedly disapprove of our system, either of doctrine or discipline, and cannot conscientiously even *acquiesce* in them, endeavours to retain and to employ his position among us for the purposes of opposition and strife,—or who continues, after due admonition, to be a member of ‘The Grand Central Association,’ or of any other confederacy formed for the object of systematic agitation,—is guilty of a flagrant transgression of that *morality of the New Testament*, the observance of which was a principal condition of his admission into our Society, and must be considered to have justly forfeited his claim to the privileges of our religious fellowship. In applying to particular cases this righteous general rule, the Conference exhorts all the superintendents to exercise, in connexion with a holy firmness, the moderation and mercy of the Gospel; bearing long, and dealing tenderly, though faithfully, with the weak, the ill-informed, and the misled; while they do not shrink from the effectual execution of necessary Christian discipline on those who, by overt acts of hostility and disturbance, identify themselves as the leaders, or open partisans, of disaffection and faction. The sound and satisfied majority of our Societies—a majority, happily, so immense as to render all comparative calculations unnecessary—have a just claim upon us for protection in the quiet enjoyment of their religious privileges; a claim which some of them have most forcibly urged, and which it is our

bounden duty to meet with a discreet but decisive enforcement of our discipline on those whom milder methods shall fail to reclaim from their course of disturbance and mischief.

“III. *Meetings for communication with the Conference by Memorial, on subjects of Local Concern, or on the General Laws of the Connexion.*

“The spirit and substance of our *present* regulations and authorised usages on this subject the Conference considers to be embodied in the following summary statement:—

“1. The Conference have said that they, as well as the district committees, will gladly receive useful intelligence and information, even from any individual member of the Society, ‘on whatever concerns themselves or their people.’ (See Minutes of 1796.)

“2. ‘The *leaders’ meeting* is the proper meeting for the Society, and the *quarterly meeting* for the circuit.’—(Minutes of 1797.) From those meetings, therefore, the Conference will receive communications, whenever they deem it *necessary* to make them, on subjects connected with *the proper business of their own Societies, or of their own circuits*, respectively.

“3. After full discussion and deliberation, it was judged (in 1797) that ‘*other* formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences.’ The grounds of this judgment were, doubtless, such as these:—The ‘other formal meetings,’ to which reference is made, are obviously *unnecessary* for the purposes of *individual* representations of fact, or for communication with the Conference on the really difficult and important affairs of a particular Society or circuit; the fullest provision being made for all these cases by the preceding articles of the same rule. If *unnecessary*, they are for *that* reason *undesirable*; because *occasions* of contention and debate ought not to be needlessly multiplied, especially

in a *religious* Society, which is bound by the law of Christ to 'follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.' Christians should rather sacrifice unessential points of opinion, or matters of personal predilection, than endanger, by an eager obtrusion of their own views, the maintenance of tranquillity and good feeling in the communities to which they belong. If the object of those who wish for the 'other formal meetings,' to which the Minute of 1797 objects, be the suggestion of any improvements in our various public institutions then, too, are they, generally speaking, as unnecessary as in the case of Society or circuit business; for in all those institutions committees are now appointed, in which preachers and laymen of unimpeachable integrity and intelligence have a place, which committees have, as such, regular official communication with the Conference, on every subject connected with their respective trusts and interests.—'Other formal meetings' cannot be needed in order to obtain redress for the alleged misconduct or mal-administration of any particular preacher or preachers; because the most ample means of obtaining such redress are already secured to complaining parties *connected with the circuit immediately concerned*, by our existing rules respecting the trial of accused preachers.—It seems, then, that no very material and legitimate business remains for the 'other formal meetings' in question, except it be the transmission to the Conference of opinions, respecting some desired change in the *general laws of the Connexion*. Now, it should be considered that frequent alterations in the laws of a religious community, when they have once been deliberately settled, are neither safe nor advantageous. Such questions should not be hastily or capriciously mooted, as they usually tend to 'gender strifes,' rather than to 'godly edifying.' A habit of petty, meddling, speculative legislation would be a dire calamity. It is not good in matters of discipline, any more than of doctrine, to be 'ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of

the truth ;—ever making new laws, or trying to mend existing ones, instead of keeping those already in force, and endeavouring to turn them to the best account for the spiritual benefit of ourselves and others.

“4. For reasons probably similar to those now stated, the Conference of 1797 did not feel themselves at liberty to establish or encourage ‘other formal meetings.’ They did not, however, wholly prohibit them, as matters of occasional occurrence ; being willing, it appears, to provide, if possible, for the permanent tranquillity of the Connexion in circumstances extraordinary as well as ordinary. They therefore appended to the statement last quoted the following rule :—

“‘In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, *we allow that other formal meetings may be held*, if they first receive the approbation of the superintendent, and the leaders’ or quarterly meetings :—provided also, that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting.’

“*The present Conference* have considered with the most respectful attention the wish which appears to have been of late revived among several of our sincere friends, that some direct and authorised medium of occasional communication with the Conference should now be provided for our people, in reference to a certain class of subjects, which do indeed concern *the general laws*, and consequently, the practical administration of Methodism ; but which, because they do not affect them in their individual capacity as members, nor yet relate, strictly or directly, to the local affairs of their particular Society or circuit, cannot, for that reason, be made the topics of discussion, or of memorial, in the leaders’ or quarterly meetings, without violating a great and important general maxim, essential to a due observance of the Christian *law of peace*, and to the orderly transaction of our public business ; namely, that every meeting among us shall confine itself to its proper and definite province, do *its own work* in

the spirit of piety and kindness, and refrain from interfering with the work of others. Anxious to maintain this maxim in its full authority, and concurring *generally* in all the reasons stated in the preceding article, as rendering 'other formal meetings' undesirable and unnecessary, (except, perhaps, on *very special* occasions,) this Conference are nevertheless solicitous, like their venerable predecessors of 1797, to meet, as far as the public peace and safety will permit, the *wish* above described. On careful deliberation, the Conference are of opinion, that the *principle* of the concluding portion of the law of 1797, already quoted, will be found to furnish the best and most expedient means of accomplishing all that can be reasonably desired. But it must be confessed, that the *details* of the rule, as it now stands, appear to be so vague, and otherwise defective, as to require considerable alteration and extension. The Conference, therefore, now agrees as follows: viz.—

"(1.) That, *after the final close* of the June quarterly meeting in every year, the superintendent shall detain the circuit stewards, and all the Society stewards, who may be present, whether belonging to the Societies in the circuit town, or to those in the country places; and shall ascertain from them whether there really exists, *in that circuit*, a general or considerable dissatisfaction with any of our existing rules, or a prevalent and earnest desire for the enactment of any new and additional regulations. If it be the opinion of a majority of the persons so consulted, or even of any considerable proportion of them, that the wish for alteration is strong and extensive, and moreover, that the matter is clearly of such importance as to justify the calling of a *special circuit meeting*, in order to consider the propriety of sending a memorial to the Conference on the subject, then, and in every such case, the superintendent is hereby *directed and required* to summon, by good and sufficient notices to all the parties concerned, such special circuit meeting, which shall assemble within a period of not

less than seven days, and not exceeding ten days, from the time of the June quarterly meeting. The power of a *veto*, in reference to the calling of such meetings, given to the superintendents by the old rule of 1797, is hereby *wholly repealed and abolished*; and the provision above stated is substituted for it.

“(2.) That, whereas the rule of 1797 did not at all *define* the composition of the ‘other formal meetings’ partially allowed by it, it is now expedient to define the constitution of the special circuit meeting above mentioned, if one shall be convened, in the following manner; viz., such meeting shall include,—

“All the travelling preachers of the circuit, comprehending the supernumerary preachers, if any:—

“The circuit stewards:—

“The stewards of the Town Society, or of all the Societies (if there be more than one) in the circuit town:—

“One of the stewards of each of those other Societies which were entered on the latest circuit schedule as containing fifty members or upwards:—

“The male class-leaders in the circuit, of *ten years’ continuous and uninterrupted standing* in that office:—

“The local preachers in the circuit, of *the same continuous and uninterrupted standing*, since they were first placed on the Plan as local preachers *fully admitted*:—

“The trustees of the Chapel or Chapels of the circuit town, (if regularly settled, and so secured to the use of the Connexion,) *being members* of the Society:—

“And one of the trustee-treasurers or trustee-stewards of every other regularly settled and secured Chapel in the circuit, *being a member* of the Society.

“The superintendent, or in the case of his unavoidable absence, some other travelling preacher appointed by him, shall always preside in the meeting.

“(3.) That at such meeting, any member thereof may propose for consideration, as before stated, the propriety of

memorialising the Conference, respecting the repeal or alteration of any of our existing laws, or of the enactment of any additional rule. Such memorial, if approved by a majority of the persons present, shall be signed *forthwith* by the individuals who concur in its adoption, and then immediately placed in the hands of the superintendent, who is made responsible for its delivery, personally or otherwise, to the President of the Conference, on or before the second day of its ensuing session. And all such memorials shall be received by the Conference, and referred to a committee of its members, who shall carefully examine, consider, and classify the whole, and report their opinion thereupon to the Conference.

“(4.) That the right of memorial on the subject of our general legislation, thus recognised and allowed, shall, however, be exercised under the following regulations, which the Conference considers to be both sound and reasonable in principle, and really necessary, in order to the prevention of great and serious evils:—First: *Notice* in writing shall be given to the superintendent, for the information of all who desire it, at least three days before the day of meeting, of the precise subject on which it is intended to propose that any memorial shall be sent to the Conference; and no proposal, of which such timely notice has not been given, shall be allowed to be brought forward for that year.—Secondly: All memorials, requesting any change in our laws, shall be limited to such changes only as are consistent with the *essential principles* of Wesleyan Methodism, and within the pale of our *established constitution*. The Conference cannot fairly be required to receive any propositions of a manifestly revolutionary character, or which are wholly subversive of that system of doctrine or discipline which has been confided to them by Mr. Wesley as a sacred deposit, and which, as they believe, has been also committed to their keeping by the providence and grace of God.—Thirdly: The rules, whose alteration, repeal, or enactment

may become the subject of discussion and memorial in such meetings, must be such rules only as have operated, or are intended to operate, *in the government of the Societies at large*. This is in literal accordance with the limitation adopted in 1797, in the analogous case of the 'new laws,' to be submitted to the consideration of the September quarterly meetings. The disciplinary jurisdiction of the preachers over each other, and their right of regulating among themselves all that relates peculiarly and specifically to the Christian ministry, and the pastoral office, are not to be considered as subjects open to the official interference by memorial of the meetings now constituted.—Fourthly: The special meeting of one circuit shall not be at liberty to intermeddle with the local affairs or proceedings of any other circuit or circuits; respecting which, its information must often, of necessity, be exceedingly partial and defective, and its interference, consequently, if attempted, must be as useless and even mischievous, as it would be culpably officious, offensive, and unconstitutional. (See Minutes of 1828, vol. vi., pp. 399–401.) With these necessary limitations, the superintendents are directed to allow, in meetings constituted as aforesaid, the free and friendly discussions of our people, and to take charge of any memorial from them, couched in proper and respectful terms.”—*Minutes of Conference for the year 1835*, vol. vii., pp. 573–590.

NOTE I.—page 37.

By a subsequent regulation, made in 1812, the administration of baptism was extended to the children “of our regular hearers.”—*Minutes of Conference*, vol. iii., p. 294.

NOTE K.—page 62.

A curious illustration of the working of the attempt to unite Connexionalism and Independency in “the Associa-

tion," is furnished in a little tract, entitled "A Warning to the Trustees of Wesleyan Association Chapels, and a practical demonstration of the kind of liberty enjoyed by the members of the Association, as developed in the proceedings of the Connexional Committee, with reference to the Edinburgh Circuit. By Richard Bladworth. London: Partridge and Oakey." The writer thus sums up the conclusions to which he comes, and which are amply borne out by the facts he narrates:—"The Committee (the Connexional Committee of the Association) assume that membership is a mere local affair, and consequently they declare that each separate Church may exclude from its communion such as a bare majority may think proper, and on what grounds it pleases; that from the decision of such individual Church there is no appeal, and that they themselves must be influenced in their proceedings by the decision of such Church, and are obliged to cease to recognise those whose conduct they approve, and continue its union with the parties whose conduct they condemn.

"Now, look at the consequences of adopting a principle like this in the government of a Connexion. It places in the hands of the minister appointed to a circuit an immense amount of power. In fact, all power resides in the minister, and he is altogether irresponsible. This may appear a bold statement to members of the Association, who have been accustomed to believe that their ministers have no power at all. But the working out of the system of government, as adopted by the Association and exemplified in the Edinburgh case, will prove this statement to be true. No circuit in the Association has the choice of its minister. He is appointed by the Annual Assembly or Connexional Committee. The circuit receiving the minister may have no previous knowledge of him. The Committee examine him as to his qualifications, and the Assembly receive him as a minister on the recommendation of the Committee, engage to find him a circuit, and guarantee the amount of salary he is to receive.

He thus goes into a circuit independent of the circuit. Not only is a minister independent of his circuit, but *when appointed* to a circuit, is equally independent of the Connexion. If he can only obtain a majority, and in order to effect which, he is at liberty to trample all local regulations under his feet, and to set at defiance every principle of honour and decency, he may act as his prejudice or caprice may lead him; and those acts, no matter how much the Connexional Committee may condemn them, must receive their sanction. Is it not very evident that the vaunted liberal constitution of the Association gives the whole power of a circuit into the hands of the minister, from whom there is no appeal to any court in the Connexion?

“The principle adopted by the Connexional Committee cannot be acted upon without injustice to the members. We conceive that a Connexional form of government is highly advantageous. One principal feature in it is this,—the giving solidity and permanency to the promulgation and practice of doctrines, principles, and usages, which would otherwise be changing and short-lived. One can scarcely have watched the history of individual churches, without coming to the conclusion, that there are in most of them persons of shallow intellect, but with a prodigious amount of self-conceit, and an itching desire to be thought of some importance. These persons are very crotchety, and ever ready to push their conceits before the notice of the Church. If each Church, as in the Association, can regulate its own affairs independently of a higher court, then the power of doing mischief is placed in the hands of these vain and ignorant characters. In any Church, but especially in a small Church, where the affairs are regulated by the decision of the members, male and female, young and old, it is easy to believe that these individuals might soon obtain a majority, and a departure from the doctrines and practices and principles which obtain in the rest of the Connexion might be brought about; and those parties, who joined the Church

for the sake of those doctrines and principles and practices, find themselves suddenly deprived of them, without the least hope of redress from the Connexion, which is professedly established to promote those very doctrines and practices and principles.

“But this principle carried out will not only prove unjust to the members, but will also issue in the most absurd consequences. Suppose the majority of any Church should become heretical, the heretical portion must of necessity be recognised as members, and the evangelical minority excluded. The Committee could not help themselves. They cannot interfere with the decision of the majority in a circuit. Here, then, we would have the spectacle of a Connexion giving its countenance and aid to a Church believing and propagating what the rest of the Connexion denounces as heresy. It will not do to say that the question of doctrine did not enter into the present case, and that when it does become a matter of dispute in a circuit it will be differently dealt with. The principle is there. And if it is legitimately applied in a case of practical error, upon what ground can its application be refused in a case of doctrinal error?”

“Such is the mongrel constitution of the Association, when reduced to practice. We are forced to the conclusion, that Connexionalism and Independency cannot be made to coalesce. Congregationalism loses its particular advantage, when deprived of the choice of the minister. And independency of circuits, in a Connexion having an itinerancy, which is necessarily independent of the circuits, places membership and the affairs of a circuit entirely in the hands of the minister, against whose acts there is no appeal to any court in the Connexion.”

NOTE L.—page 78.

“When,” says Isaac Taylor, “purposes of evangelic aggression only are in view, much may be said with reason

in behalf of a purely clerical conclave, or deliberative assembly, which shall be exclusive of laymen.

"It ought not to be thought that we take low ground, or that we are recommending that which must, in the end, secularise religion, when we pay regard to those secondary principles of action which spring from our common human nature. A Church system which utterly refuses to recognise inferior motives will be inefficient and impracticable, except so long as its fervour is at the highest pitch; a Church which builds wholly upon such motives is nothing better, at any time, than a worldly polity. We do not build upon any such motives, but we never lose sight of them.

"Those arduous, and often perilous, labours, by means of which—and on no easier terms, in any state of society, and not less in the heart of Christianised countries than in heathen lands—the Gospel may be carried out and planted upon new ground, imply and demand a very high tone of religious feeling among those who charge themselves with these enterprises. This work of aggression—this dauntless entry upon the royal preserves of Satan, and this continuance in the soldier's course—this endurance of contempt, buffeting, defeat, and 'hardness,' in many forms of real suffering, and of tormenting annoyance—will never be carried forward by men who have not braced their minds by an habitual recurrence to the ultimate motives of that course of life to which they have devoted themselves. Men—however good, fervent, and benevolent—who listen to gentle whispers, who are wont, as the phrase is, 'to think better of it,' and who take advice from those who stand at men's elbows ready to endorse the pleadings of an infirm conscience, such will not do the work of which now we are speaking:—in a word, it is a work which demands a high and sustained tone pervading *a select body of men*, and which would almost certainly be lowered or abated by the stated presence, and the official intervention of laymen. The layman, individually, whose views and temper were such as to

place him on a level with the loftiest spirits in a conclave of ministers, would, by the very fact of possessing such a mind, cease to be a layman. But when a deliberative assembly is so constituted as to include, of right, a certain proportion of lay members, these, in whatever way elected, must be taken as they come, and they can never, as a body, possess a very exalted character; at the best, they will be no better than the best of the people. Some of the more active spirits among these lay deputies will be forward to recommend courses of ministerial enterprise which, if they themselves were ministers, they would never suggest; and in doing so, they will rouse some ministerial counteraction, which will not stop till it has gone too far: the 'wise' among the lay brethren will be likely to go over to the same counteractive side; and thus less will be undertaken and done than as if ministers had been left to the promptings of their spontaneous zeal.

"Within a purely ministerial conclave, assembling periodically, formally, and *authoritatively*, the ambition (not necessarily unholy) which seeks the welfare and increase, the stability and the augmentation, of the INSTITUTE whence the individual men themselves derive their social and professional existence—their all, will not be wanting. A feeling of this sort is one of the most powerful that are incident to human nature; we gain nothing by depriving it of all space and opportunity; we gain much by giving it a legitimate scope.

"An assembly such as we now suppose, and consisting, whether of one, of two, or of three hundred members, will not—unless in times of extreme lifelessness—be wanting in at least a few eminent instances of high energy, practical determination, lofty motive, firm principle; and these will not merely be allowed the influence which is their right—the inalienable right of the gifted—to guide the mass; but they will impart to it their tone, they will diffuse throughout it their feeling, they will animate, by their words and by

their looks, the less enterprising; they will defeat the captious, and they will shame the inert. The body will become such as is its inhabitant soul. Far greater things will thus be devised, proposed, enacted, and effected, than any, singly, would have thought of as practicable.

"If thus we have secured, within the conclave, the motive power which must spring from the bosoms of a few, we should next see to it that this body of men be such—or be in such a position as that they may best receive, and best transmit, this same impulse, and diffuse it. The Wesleyan Conference, as framed by Wesley himself, was well constituted for *this* purpose. No purely spontaneous and precarious meeting together of individuals will ever exhibit, or has ever exhibited, a sustained energy in carrying out its intentions, or any continuous consistency of plan, from year to year, or any unity of purpose; or has had enough of impetus to overcome those petty oppositions and caprices that swarm about voluntary associations. The members of such a council must feel that their election to it is a distinction, and they should feel, too, that this honour brings with it no trivial responsibilities, and that these, be they what they may, can be foregone on no other condition than that of the loss of status, character, and social existence. Never will great things be effected by a body of men, to any of whom, individually, the sort of petitionary question might be put—'Will you not attend our next annual meeting?'—followed by the surmising prayer—'Do, if you can!' It is in no such style as this, we may be perfectly certain, that war can be successfully waged with Satan, and he and his hosts driven in upon their defences. The individuals of an aggressive evangelic body must all be subject to stern law; they must be accustomed to act and to move by rule and order; and they must go forth singly, full of an effective energy—more than their own—that is to say, the energy of the collective force which sends them out.

"Human nature, being such as it is, and if we take it in

the mass, and exclude from our reckoning some rare and eminent instances, the men from whom arduous services for the public good are expected, must be held exempt from the pressure of private cares, from excessive anxieties, and from all shadow of dependance upon the precarious favour or caprices of individuals, or of small constituencies. When a man is struggling for himself, and for his own, he may be left to meet the difficulties of his position as he can; not so (a hero now and then excepted, or a martyr) when he is called to suffer and to labour for interests that are not immediately personal. Wesley well understood this; and while calculating his fiscal resources in the most exact manner, and adjusting every claim on the most frugal scale, he lifted from the shoulders of the men who were to be his 'helpers' the oppressive burden of their personal cares;—he would have their *help*; and therefore he saved them from the rankling anguish which is daily endured by those who, while serving the Church, are torn with cares for a wife and children. The itinerant preacher, whether single or married, a father or not, set a firm foot upon the ground he trod; and while frugal, and observant of the Methodistic sumptuary discipline, he was safe, free, cheerful; and he had at command his constitutional stock of courage, unabated; it was not required of him that he should work, travel, preach, govern, while himself subject, every day, to the perennial ague of hopeless poverty."—*Wesley, and Methodism*, pp. 222—226.

NOTE M.—page 64.

The mode of appointment to the ruling eldership in Presbyterian Churches has suggested some of the proposals contained in this article.

ERRATA.

Page 45, line 2, *for* these means of grace, *read* they.

46, 2, *for* have, *read* leave.

55, 22, *for* the same, *read* this object.

73, 13, *for* three *read* two.

82, 1, *for* discharge, *read* fulfil.

89, 9, *for* founders *read* Founder.

89, lines 9, 10, *for* themselves, *read* himself and his
people.